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Social and human rights questions: genetic privacy and non-discrimination

Information and comments received from Governments and relevant international organizations and functional commissions pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/39

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its decision 2003/232 of 22 July 2003, the Economic and Social Council decided to postpone consideration of the question of genetic privacy and non-discrimination to its substantive session of 2004 to allow for a thorough review of the issue on the basis, inter alia, of the report of the Secretary-General requested by Council resolution 2001/39 of 26 July 2001, entitled "Genetic privacy and non-discrimination" (E/2003/91).

The present report contains further information and comments received from Member States and various entities of the United Nations system. This supplemental information has been compiled in an effort to provide the Council, at its substantive session of 2004, with a clearer picture of the views of Member States, and should be read in conjunction with the above-mentioned report.

* E/2004/100.

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I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council considered the issue of genetic privacy and non-discrimination at its substantive session in 2003. It had before it a report of the Secretary-General (E/2003/91) containing information and comments received from Member States and various entities of the United Nations system pursuant to Council resolution 2001/39 of 26 July 2001 entitled "Genetic privacy and non-discrimination".

2. In that resolution, the Council recognized and asserted the importance of the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of genetic characteristics. The Council urged States to ensure that this principle be respected and that genetic testing be done with the consent of the person concerned, while protecting his or her privacy. It also invited States to take appropriate specific measures to ensure respect for these principles, called upon them to promote the development and implementation of standards in this field and urged them to support research in the area of human genetics and biotechnology with due respect for the above-mentioned principles. It also requested the Secretary-General to bring resolution 2001/39 to the attention of all Governments and relevant international organizations and functional commissions in order to collect information and comments, and to submit a report thereon to the Council at its substantive session of 2003.

3. In its decision 2003/232, adopted at its substantive session of 2003, the Council decided to postpone consideration of the question of genetic privacy and non-discrimination to its substantive session in 2004 to allow for a thorough review of this matter. To assist the Council in this respect, a further request for information and comments on this issue was transmitted to Member States and various entities of the United Nations system. This report contains the supplemental information received.

II. Information and comments provided by Member States

Denmark

4. The Danish Medical Research Council and the Danish Social Science Research Council fully supports the resolution, which intends to bring to the attention of all Governments and international organizations the issue of genetic privacy and non-discrimination. The resolution deals with important issues in relation to genetic testing, stressing consent and confidentiality as prerequisites for the undertaking of such testing, as well as stressing that consent must be prior, free, informed and express. The resolution invites States to take measures to prevent that the use of genetic information lead to discrimination, particularly in social, medical and employment-related areas.

5. It is to be noted that Denmark has implemented legislation prohibiting the discriminatory use of genetic information relating to healthy subjects in the areas related to employment and insurance. Furthermore, clinical genetic testing is performed in specialized medical centres, and testing as part of research protocols requires the approval of a scientific ethical committee, ensuring that no testing is done without the subject's consent and that information pertaining to other members

of the subject's family is handled in a professional way respecting individual autonomy.

6. Denmark finds it very important that research in this area fully respects human dignity, freedom, and human rights, as stated in the resolution, and finds that this aim can best be realized through contributions from the social sciences and the humanities.

7. Furthermore, Denmark presumes that the resolution will be in conformity with the European Convention of 4 April 1997 concerning human rights and biomedicine, which Denmark has incorporated into its legislation by order number 65 of 11 December 2000.

Greece

8. Greece's National Bioethics Committee has already occupied itself specifically with the issue in its recommendation on the collection and use of genetic data (16 September 2002). This recommendation has the same scope as Council resolution 2001/39. Both texts underline, in particular, the pivotal role of the free consent of the person concerned for the use and processing of his/her genetic data.

9. In respect to individual issues referred to in Council resolution 2001/39, the Committee considers section 3, according to which States are called upon to take the appropriate measures, including legislative, for the prevention of genetic discrimination in sensitive social fields (including the field of work), in the private and public sectors, to be very important. The Committee also recognized in its recommendation the need for special legislation in the context of labour relations.

10. Section 4 of the resolution is also substantive. The Committee regards as necessary an addendum for the need of special legislation with respect to biobanks.

11. The Committee also draws attention to the importance of the control of the use of genetic information by personal data protection authorities, even if there is no relevant legislation thereon. It would be appropriate to emphasize the importance of such institutions in the resolution.

Iceland

A. Act on Biobanks

12. On 1 January 2001, the Icelandic Act on Biobanks entered into force. The Act covers the storage of biosamples in biobanks, but not temporary storage, that is, storage for the purposes of medical diagnosis or minor scientific research. The establishment of a biobank requires a licence, issued by the Minister of Health. Among the conditions for a licence are that the biobank will be kept physically in Iceland, that clear information is provided on the manner in which samples are to be stored and that the security assessment and procedures regarding the harvesting and processing of the biosamples are in compliance with rules, which the Data Protection Authority publishes on the security of personal data in biobanks. The Data Protection Authority is now evaluating the security of personal data in biobanks with regard to these rules.

13. The harvesting of a biosample for storing in a biobank requires informed, written consent by the biosample donor. On the other hand, storing of a biosample, which has been previously harvested for medical diagnosis purposes, requires only presumed consent. The biosample donor can at any time revoke his or her consent. If the biosample was collected for storage in a biobank, then revoking the consent requires the destruction of the sample. But if it was harvested for medical purposes, then revoking the presumed consent only constitutes a ban on the usage of the biosample except for the benefit of the donor or with his or her separate, express permission. However, if vital interests are at stake and the benefit outweighs the possible inconvenience for the biosample donor of other persons, the biosample may still be used for those purposes.

14. The purposes for which a biosample may be used are the clear and legitimate purposes for which it was collected; diagnosis of diseases; quality control, method development, and teaching purposes, as long as the biosamples are processed without personal identifiers; scientific research; and use for other purposes than those the samples were collected for if vital interests are at stake and the benefit outweighs the possible inconvenience for the biosample donor or other persons. For use of biosamples in scientific research and other purposes than those they were collected for, a permit from the Data Protection Authority and the National Bioethics Committee is needed (this overview of the Act on Biobanks is based on an unpublished description of the act from May 2003 by Hördur Helgi Helgason, consultant with The Legal Farm).

B. Act on a Health Sector Database

15. On 22 December 1998, the Act on a Health Sector Database entered into force. According to the Act, a centralized database (which has not yet become a reality) will contain data from medical records on the whole Icelandic population. The private company *deCODE/Íslensk erfoagreining* has been granted a licence by the Minister of Health to create and operate this database. According to the Act, it shall only contain "non-personally identifiable health data with the aim of increasing knowledge in order to improve health and health services". Those who do not want to have data from their health records recorded in the database have the right to abstain, but consent is not required. The health data may be joined with data from a database containing genetic data and a database containing genealogical data. The results of the joining of these three databases must be non-personally identifiable. The Data Protection Authority shall monitor the creation and operation of the health sector database and the joining of databases, but some tasks concerning the supervision of the database shall be undertaken by the Committee charged with the creation and operation of a health service database and an interdisciplinary ethics committee, which shall assess studies carried out within the licencee's company and research questions for the database which are received.

16. On 27 November 2003, the Supreme Court of Iceland delivered a judgement in a case concerning the health sector database. The circumstances in the case were as follows: A woman wanted information on her late father not to be put into the database, but she was denied of this since the act on the database only grants this right to the data subject himself. However, the Supreme Court came to the conclusion that her claim should be accepted because health information on her father could be relevant in assessing her own health. Also, in the light of the Constitution of Iceland, which grants everyone the right to privacy, the Supreme

Court considered the Act on the database to be too vague in terms of data security, e.g., encryption of data, and security when matching the data in the health sector database with data in the geneological database and the genetic database.

C. Informed consent in scientific research

17. Informed consent is often required for the use of genetic data in scientific research. According to the Act on Patient Rights, participation in scientific or medical research must be based on an informed consent. However, research projects that are completely retrospective may, according to the Data Protection Authority's interpretation, be performed without consent if there are some special circumstances justifying it, for example, if working with a very big sample of data subjects is unavoidable.

18. In permits issued by the Data Protection Authority for the processing of personal data in scientific research, informed consent is often required. Such processing need not always be based upon such a permit. However, according to rules on when to notify or obtain a permit for the processing of personal data, issued by the Data Protection Authority, a permit is always needed for genetic research. Whether or not the consent of the data subjects is required in such permits, depends, of course, on the legal considerations described above.

19. When informed consent from the data subject in scientific or medical research is required according to law, regulations or permits from the Data Protection Authority, the consent must be obtained in accordance with rules on how to obtain informed consent for the processing of personal data in scientific, medical research, issued by the Data Protection Authority. Among other things, those rules state that a participant must be informed in writing on, for example, the purpose of the project, how it will be conducted, possible dangers, the kinds of information that will be processed, wherefrom information will be sought, security of data, when personal information and personal identifiers will be destroyed, whether data will be transmitted abroad or published on the Internet, and whether a subject can revoke his or her consent and what implications that will have, among other things, on personal data that has been processed.

D. Act on a police genetic data register

20. On 31 May 2001, the Act on a police genetic data register, entered into force. By this Act, the National Commissioner of the Icelandic Police shall be in charge of a digital register containing genetic data. The register shall be used to facilitate the investigation of criminal cases. Genetic data may only be registered on persons that have committed certain severe crimes, such as murder, rape, battery, and sex-abuse of children, but also when there are "urgent reasons" and the information is of "special significance for the utility value of the register". The data subject shall be notified in writing of the registration. Data shall be obliterated no more than two years after the data subject has passed away, six months after he or she has been found innocent in a reopened case, or when it is discovered that the data is wrong or has been registered unlawfully. The processing of data shall be in conformance with the Act on the protection and processing of personal data, under the authority of the Data Protection Authority.

E. Bill on an act on insurance contracts

21. A bill on a new act on insurance contracts is now (February 2004) before the Icelandic Parliament. According to the bill, an insurance company may not, before or after an insurance agreement is made, seek, obtain by other means, receive, or exploit information on an individual's genetic characteristics. Also, it is prohibited for an insurance company to seek investigations that are necessary to gain access to such information. However, this prohibition does not apply to investigations of the current or former health status of the insurance taker or other individuals. The Data Protection Authority has criticized that investigations may be made on the health of "other individuals". It considers that such investigations cannot be anything else than investigations of genetic characteristics (contrary to the views that are expressed in the remarks in the bill on this clause).

Malaysia

22. Malaysia views the subject of genetic privacy and non-discrimination as one that inherently seeks to balance the advancement of science and technology while protecting the rights of individuals. Rapid progress and achievements in the area of biotechnology have allowed scientists and researchers to map the human genome, allowing for the greater advancement of knowledge concerning genetic and medical sciences. At the same time, there is a need to ensure that progress in this area does not infringe upon human rights, and human beings are not discriminated against based on their own genetic information. Moreover, the ethical and moral questions raised with regard to genetic information need to take into account the concerns and sensitivities of countries and communities and strike a balance between the needs of science and those of privacy.

23. Essentially, the issues involved in genetic privacy and non-discrimination revolve around, but are not limited to, the cloning of human beings, the disclosure of genetic and personal information, confidentiality of information between doctors, patients and the Government, the use of body parts from deceased persons for therapeutic purposes or for medical education and research, and discrimination based on genetic information. Malaysia believes that any measure to address these issues require the active participation of Governments in enacting and enforcing necessary legislation, as well as ensuring the primacy of and adherence to the country's laws. Towards this end, the Malaysian Government is taking necessary steps to address this issue.

24. At present, the Government of Malaysia is formulating legislation regarding the confidentiality of genetic information of the individual, thus setting the standard for the collection, use and disclosure of such information. The Ministry of Health is in the process of setting up the National Ethical Council to ensure consistency with regard to the ethical consideration of all aspects of research activities involving human subjects and to ensure the rights of its citizens, including the protection of their privacy in such studies.

25. Malaysia is considering amendments to specific legislation, as well as the enactment of new legislation to address the issues involved in genetic privacy and non-discrimination.

A. Human Reproductive Cloning Bill

26. The Government is considering a Human Reproductive Cloning Bill with the purpose of prohibiting the reproductive cloning of human beings, in particular addressing human reproductive cloning by somatic cell nuclear transfer and other methods that are to be determined. Provisions will be included to prohibit the disclosure of information to any person other than an authorized officer in the said exercise.

27. The Bill will also contain provisions on enforcement and penalties for contravention of the provisions of the Bill. Certain exemptions, however, will be provided in relation to the prohibition, among others, where disclosure is required for the purpose of legal proceedings, investigations and enforcement of relevant laws.

B. Personal Data Protection Bill

28. The Government is in the process of drafting a Personal Data Protection Bill, which aims at regulating the protection of personal data. Personal data is defined as information recorded in a document, whether automatically processed or manually recorded, which relates to a living individual and which is in the possession of an organization or public sector agency. The information may be contained in any document, including a disc, tape or other device. The information includes text, as well as visual images, such as photographs and film, and excludes oral information. This personal data can only be disclosed with the consent of the individual.

29. The Bill also provides certain exemptions where the information is required by law, by an order of the Court, to assist in legal proceedings and for research purposes. Results from research that utilizes the personal data of an individual shall not reveal the identity of the individual from whom the information was obtained.

30. The Bill also provides for the inclusion of genetic information in the definition of personal data to be specified as "sensitive personal data". The utilization of such data in collection, use and disclosure will be included in existing regulations such as the Private Health Facilities and Services Act 1998, section 115 (Confidentiality of Information).

31. Confidentiality between doctors and patients is addressed in the Medical Act 1971, section 29 (2)(b), which provides for disciplinary proceedings against registered medical practitioners in breach of professional conduct. This is based on the Code of Conduct of Professional Conduct, section 2: Abuse of professional privileges and skills (Abuse of trust and confidence). Doctors are expected to conform to the guidelines issued by the Malaysian Medical Council in carrying out their duties.

C. The Human Tissues Act 1974

32. The Act regulates the use of body part(s) (tissue) from deceased persons for therapeutic purposes and for the purposes of medical education and research. Section 2(2) of the Act provides for consultation with the next of kin to ensure that there has been no expressed objection by the deceased (when alive) to the removal of any body part(s) (tissue) from his body.

D. Persons with disabilities

33. The Government of Malaysia is drafting a bill on persons with disabilities, which would prohibit discrimination against such persons in both the public and private working sectors, education and other areas. Although the bill does not specifically provide for the non-discrimination against persons with disabilities based on their gene pool information, it does however provide for some protection against discrimination on such basis.

E. Other issues

34. Above and beyond specific legislation to safeguard human rights with respect to the issue of discrimination, the Malaysian Federal Constitution, under its article 8(1), guarantees equality for all persons before the law. Article 8(2) of the Constitution provides that there shall be no discrimination against citizens on the grounds of religion, race, descent, place of birth or gender in any law or in the appointment to any office or employment under a public authority. An individual's genetic information is therefore prohibited from being used in any form of discrimination, whether in social, medical or employment-related areas.

35. The Ethical Research Committee of the Ministry of Health does not allow genetic testing to be carried out on any specimen that is sent overseas or in any research where genetic testing is not included in the main objective. If there is a request to do so, consent has to be obtained from the trial subjects with the condition that they need to understand fully the implication of the tests being carried out.

36. Another important aspect of genetic privacy which needs to be addressed is the copyright issue with regard to genetic information. The existing and proposed legislations in Malaysia take into account this concern. However, the relative infancy of genetic information and non-discrimination issues require further study into this aspect.

Mali

37. The Government of Mali has provided the following communication from the permanent secretariat of the National Committee for Health and Life Science:

Considering the 1992 Constitution of Mali, which provides:

Article 1: "The human person is sacred and inviolable, and all individuals have the right to life, liberty, security and personal integrity";

Article 2: "All Malians are born and remain free and equal in their rights and duties. Any discrimination based on social origin, colour, language, race, gender, religion or political opinions is prohibited";

Article 6: "The home, property, private and family life, and privacy of correspondence and communications are inviolable";

Article 7: "Freedom of the press is recognized and guaranteed. It shall be exercised under conditions established by law";

Article 17: "Education, instruction, training, work, housing, leisure, health and social welfare constitute recognized rights";

Considering the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, to which Mali has acceded, which provides, inter alia:

Article 1: "The Member States of the Organization of African Unity parties to the present Charter shall recognize the rights, duties and freedoms enshrined in this Charter and shall undertake to adopt legislative or other measures to give effect to them";

Article 2: "Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status";

Article 4: "Human beings are inviolable. Every human being shall be entitled to respect for his life and the integrity of his person. No one may be arbitrarily deprived of this right";

Considering the international conventions to which Mali has acceded:

(a) Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 2: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration";

(b) Declaration of Helsinki of the World Medical Association:

Article 21: "Every precaution should be taken to respect the privacy of the subject, the confidentiality of the patient's information";

(c) International Code of Medical Ethics, adopted at the 35th World Medical Assembly at Venice (Italy) in October 1983, which stipulates in its "Duties of physicians in general": "A physician shall preserve absolute confidentiality on all he knows about his patient even after the patient has died";

Considering the present resolution which has been transmitted to us,

The permanent secretariat of the National Committee for Health and Life Science believes that the draft resolution fully accords with Mali's concerns and commends its authors for their efforts.

Mexico

38. The Federal Act on Transparency and Access to Public Government Information entered into force on 12 June 2002. Articles 13 and 18 thereof designate as classified any information which, if disseminated, could endanger the life, safety or health of any person, and as confidential any personal data which, pursuant to the Act, requires the consent of the individual concerned prior to its dissemination, distribution or sale. Similarly, article 21 of the Act provides that individuals subject to it may not disseminate, distribute or sell the personal data stored in information systems created by them in exercise of their functions, except in cases where they have obtained the explicit consent, in writing or by a similar means of authentication, of the individuals to whom the data refers.

39. Article 100 of the General Health Act sets out the guidelines to be followed when carrying out research into human beings. The last section of that article refers to additional guidelines contained in the regulation implementing the General Health Act in relation to health-related research, article 21 of which provides, inter alia, that individuals likely to be subjected to research must, prior to giving their consent, be informed that their identity will not be disclosed and that their personal information will remain confidential. Article 421 of the General Health Act provides that any person departing from the aforementioned guidelines shall receive an administrative sanction consisting of a fine of between 4,000 and 10,000 times the average minimum daily salary in the relevant economic sector.

40. Moreover, on 23 October 2003, with presidential assent, the National Commission for the Human Genome was established. The Commission is responsible for, inter alia, proposing any necessary amendments and updates to the relevant legal framework, recommending criteria to be observed during study and research involving the human genome and cooperating with the competent bodies in order to establish the ethical principles that must guide research and technological development relating to the human genome.

Oman

41. Genetic tests are performed with the consent of the individual and with the guarantee that information obtained from genetic tests will be confidential and not to be used against them, and not subject them to discrimination based on genetic characteristics, within the bounds of international law of human rights. Enormous progress has been achieved in the field of genetic research, which presents the opportunity to discover much more information regarding individual genetic characteristics when carrying out this type of test. It is, therefore, important to enact laws based on moral norms and general rules to deal with the results of these tests. It is necessary to review these laws periodically, to update them and to include provisions as required concerning genetic privacy, since genetic information could open the door to various types of discrimination.

42. The Sultanate of Oman does not discriminate based on genetic characteristics. Therefore, it does not carry out compulsory genetic tests.

Serbia and Montenegro

43. In the existing legislation that regulates the system of health-care and health insurance in the territory of the Republic of Serbia there are no specific provisions related to genetic data and non-discrimination. Article 12 of the Law on Health-Care Protection stipulates that "medical workers and other employees shall be obliged to keep professional secrets, i.e. to maintain the privacy of data on the health condition of patients, including the causes, circumstances and consequences of their illness. These data shall not be communicated to other persons or in any way made public that might reveal the identity of the patient."

44. Health-care institutions and other health-care providers, including medical personnel ensuring health care, shall be obliged to apply only tested and scientifically proven methods and procedures in the course of prevention, diagnosing and treatment of diseases and rehabilitation. New methods and

procedures in the provision of health care may be introduced with the prior approval of the relevant medical institution, on the basis of an opinion provided by the ministry in charge of health care and an appropriate medical university.

45. Health-care institutions in the territory of the Republic of Serbia that conduct genetic research with a view to facilitating early detection and diagnosis of genetic diseases are obliged to abide by the legal regulations mentioned above and respect the dignity and privacy of each patient. The importance of maintaining the privacy of genetic data and non-discrimination and of the recommendations and resolutions of the United Nations, World Health Organization and European Union in the field of human rights, and the need to promote health care and non-discrimination in the field of providing health-care protection were used as guidelines in drafting the new laws. For example, the draft Law on biomedically assisted insemination procedures regulates medical documentation related to this type of insemination and the characteristics of scientific and research procedures on reproduction cells and embryos, as well as respect for the general principles of medical ethics and patients' rights. Acknowledging that it is important to address appropriately the issue of the privacy of genetic data and principle of non-discrimination, the competent authorities in the Republic of Serbia continue with their efforts to enact legislation and create an appropriate institutional framework for its implementation.

46. In the Republic of Montenegro, under the existing Law on Health-Care Protection there are no legal provisions ensuring protection of genetic data and non-discrimination. The new law on health-care protection, whose adoption is pending, provides for the protection of patients' rights, in line with the provisions of the European Charter. There are plans to enact a law on the management of waste, which will regulate the issue of medical waste disposal.

Tunisia

47. All the provisions of the draft resolution on discrimination and genetic privacy are in line with the ethical principles that we have always defended within all international organizations, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

48. The National Medical Ethics Committee has always considered that all States should ensure that no one is subjected to discrimination based on genetic characteristics, that the privacy of those subject to genetic testing is protected and that genetic testing is done with the prior, free and informed consent of the individual or authorization obtained in accordance with domestic law or the international law of human rights.

49. In this regard, it should be pointed out that the Tunisian delegation, that participated in the work of the International Bioethics Committee from 23 to 27 June 2003 at UNESCO and chaired the meeting of government experts responsible for finalizing the draft international declaration on human genetic data, considered at length the two ethical principles mentioned in the aforementioned draft resolution and was able to formulate a consensus draft declaration that was adopted by the General Conference in September 2003. The draft declaration addressed the collection, processing, use and storage of human genetic data, which have potential risks for the exercise and observance of human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

50. Although research involving genetic data continues to raise great hopes in the international scientific community and civil society, who see in it the possibility of diagnosing and even treating and alleviating genetic diseases, it must be pointed out that diagnoses of genetic diseases have ethical implications and may compromise individuals' free will and privacy and give rise to new forms of stigmatization or even discrimination in the area of employment. Hence there is a need to prohibit by law discrimination based on genetic characteristics and to protect the right to confidentiality of individuals subjected to genetic testing referred to in articles 6 and 7 of the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights, to which Tunisia has acceded and which has been effectively and widely disseminated by the Committee.

51. Furthermore, aware of the complexity, scope and significance of this question, but also of the urgent need to define recognized principles and standards to be adopted at the national level, the National Medical Ethics Committee has decided to dedicate its eighth annual conference, to be held on Friday, 2 April 2004 at Beit El Hikma, to the issue of "Genetic data: scientific context, practical applications and ethical, legal and economic challenges".

52. At the conclusion of its work, the National Medical Ethics Committee intends to submit proposals concerning the protection of genetic data, since that data may have implications for the most private aspects of individuals' lives.

Ukraine

53. In recent years, the conditions have been created in Ukraine for ensuring full cooperation with the international community in studying the ethical, legal, medical and social aspects of the issue of genetic privacy and non-discrimination.

54. The Ministry of Health, the Academy of Medical Science and the National Academy of Science, in particular, are playing an active role in developing that cooperation.

55. Under a joint decree of the Ministry of Health and the Academy of Medical Science, decree No. 313/59 of 1 December 2000 entitled "Further development of medical genetics and bioethics in Ukraine", an interdepartmental coordinating council on the fundamental issues and practical problems of medical genetics was established under the authority of the Presidium of the Academy of Medical Science and the Ministry of Health. The council is made up of scientists in the field of medical genetics who are well known in Ukraine. The decree also provides that, when the state budgets of Ukraine are set for the following years, revenue associated with the funding of measures for the development of medical genetics must be attributed to the list of protected budget items.

56. Since matters of genetic privacy and non-discrimination relate to a wide range of not only medical and biological, but also ethical, legal, social and other issues, the composition of the bioethics committee under the Presidium of the Academy of Medical Science was approved by the aforementioned joint decree of the Ministry of Health and the Academy of Medical Science. Its membership includes Ukrainian scientists well known in the areas of theoretical and clinical medicine.

57. The next step towards creating the legal conditions for the accession of Ukraine to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the

Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine, and towards initiating cooperation with competent State bodies in foreign countries and with international organizations in relation to the protection of the rights of the human being with regard to the application of biology and medicine, was the establishment of the Bioethics Commission, by decision No. 1677 of the Cabinet of Ministers of 13 December 2001 entitled "Establishment of the Bioethics Commission". The Commission functions as an advisory and consultative organ of the Cabinet of Ministers.

58. The prevention of discrimination on genetic grounds, issues relating to the conduct of genetic testing with due regard for the primacy of human rights, further developments in the area of genetic engineering and hybridoma technology, and the elaboration of techniques to use gene therapy to combat disease — this is far from a complete list of the issues to be dealt with in the area of competence of the aforementioned structures existing in our country in the sphere of bioethics.

59. In implementing the aforementioned measures, Ukraine believes that the standard of bioethics in the country indicates its level of civilization, considering that the world scientific community and international organizations treat bioethics as a matter of the highest priority.

III. Information and comments provided by the United Nations system

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

60. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that since its input to the Secretary-General's report of last year a working paper on human rights and the human genome has been submitted to the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights by its member, Ms. Antoanella-Iulia Motoc (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/36). On the basis of the working paper, the Subcommission decided to appoint Ms. Motoc as Special Rapporteur to undertake a study on human rights and the human genome and requested her to submit a preliminary report to the subcommission at its fifty-sixth session and her final report to the Commission at its sixty-first session. The Commission on Human Rights has been requested to approve this decision of the Subcommission at its sixtieth session in 2004.

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Economic and environmental questions: cartography

Sixteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Sixteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, convened in accordance with Economic and Social Council decisions 2000/229 of 26 July 2000 and 2002/229 of 23 July 2002, was held in Okinawa, Japan, from 14 to 18 July 2003.

The present report briefly describes the activities carried out by the Conference and presents its major findings and recommendations, including the resolution that requires that the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific be convened for five working days in 2006, with a primary focus on the continued and strengthened contribution of cartography and geographic information in support of the implementation of Agenda 21.

* E/2004/100.

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Introduction

1. The Sixteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, convened in accordance with Economic and Social Council decisions 2000/229 of 26 July 2000 and 2002/229 of 23 July 2002, was held in Okinawa, Japan, from 14 to 18 July 2003. The Conference was attended by 302 representatives and observers from 44 countries,[1] 5 specialized agencies and international scientific organizations[2] and 30 invited speakers. The Conference elected the representative of China as President.

2. The provisional agenda of the Conference was prepared by the United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific at its fifteenth session (Kuala Lumpur, 11-14 April 2000).[3] The Conference has been recognized as a regional forum where governmental officials, planners, scientists and experts from Asia and the Pacific and other regions address the common needs and problems, experiences and best practices in the fields of cartography and geographic information, including educational and training aspects, scientific and technological requirements, implementation issues and benefits. The Conference considered the progress made in the development and implementation of national spatial data infrastructures since the Fifteenth Conference and the specific contributions of cartography and geographic information in support of the implementation of Agenda 21.[4]

3. The work of the Conference was organized around three technical committees established to deal with a range of specific issues pertinent to cartography, surveying, land management, geographic information technologies and spatial data infrastructure in support of sustainable development as defined by an agenda item of the Conference. Committee I, on development needs and institutional capacity-building, was chaired by the representative of Japan; Committee II, on fundamental data, including their collection and management in an integrated approach, was chaired by the representative of China; and Committee III, on spatial data infrastructures and their development in Asia and the Pacific, was chaired by the representative of Republic of Korea.

4. The Conference adopted seven resolutions, including an expression of gratitude. The resolutions reflected both the spatial data infrastructure issues expressed in plenary sessions and specific matters debated in the three technical committees of the Conference. The proceedings of the conference are issued in one volume, containing the report of the Conference and the resolutions adopted. The technical papers submitted to the Conference were distributed to the participants, and the report of the Conference, already published (E/CONF.95/7), will be mailed to all participants and disseminated through the geographical names web site of the United Nations Statistics Division (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo).

Findings

5. The Conference reviewed the status of the resolutions of the Fifteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific and acknowledged with appreciation the work performed by the working groups of the Permanent Committee on Geographic Information System (GIS) Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific during the past three years. The Conference highlighted some

significant achievements, including regional geodetic observation campaigns, a pilot project on administrative boundary data, Asia-Pacific spatial data infrastructure clearing house, cadastral template and training by the Permanent Committee in Hainan, China. The Conference acknowledged the policy on data sharing developed by the Permanent Committee and recognized the importance of developing a pan-Asia-Pacific fundamental data set and of continuing the development of the clearing house in order to enable the data sets to be accessed by member countries.

6. Country reports were provided by 12 countries in the Asia and Pacific region: Australia, China, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Vanuatu and United Arab Emirates, plus Nicaragua. Major trends in the Asia and Pacific region, according to the reports, included: (a) prioritization of institutional capacity-building and clearing house development for better data access and use in spatial data infrastructure development and implementation; (b) the relationship between land administration and spatial data infrastructure; and (c) strengthening of communication and cooperation between countries in the region for the acquisition and sharing of spatial data through the activities of the Permanent Committee.

7. The Conference, through the work of Committee I on development needs and institutional capacity-building, presented and discussed relevant aspects related to capacity-building experiences in different countries, a development needs questionnaire and cadastral issues, including cadastral template, marine cadastre and the relationship between cadastral and topographic mapping. The Conference Committee noted that capacity-building was a concept that involved the development of both human and social capital and included both capacity assessment and capacity development at three levels — societal, organizational and individual. The Committee stressed that the Permanent Committee should foster and create strategic linkages to other agencies and organizations involved in capacity-building.

8. The Conference, through the work of Committee II on fundamental data, acknowledged the progress made by the Permanent Committee in implementing policies for sharing fundamental data and developing regional fundamental data sets, as well as the progress made in respect of the Global Mapping Project. The Conference, encouraged by those achievements, endorsed the Permanent Committee on Geographic Information System Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific Policy Statement for an Asia-Pacific Boundaries Dataset and its Basic Principles for Developing and Utilizing the Asia-Pacific Regional Fundamental Dataset. The Conference recommended that the Permanent Committee continue to develop regional fundamental data sets and clearing house and GIS applications and to provide support for a training programme on capacity-building in fundamental data, offered by the Geological Survey Institute of Japan and funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The Conference also recommended that the Permanent Committee undertake those tasks in collaboration with other initiatives, such as the Global Mapping Project, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group, the United Nations Geographic Database Project and the Second Administrative-level Boundaries Data Set Project.

9. Spatial data infrastructure and its development in Asia and the Pacific were covered by the work of Committee III. The Conference Committee discussed

relevant aspects related to the promotion of the development of spatial data infrastructures in the region and proposed the following: (a) continued development of a regional geodetic infrastructure; (b) identification of fundamental data sets and linkages to statistical information; and (c) development of the role of cadastral and land tenure layers within the regional spatial data infrastructure. The work of the Committee also addressed technical issues dealing with the development and integration of the cadastral and land tenure layers within the regional spatial data infrastructure using geodetic referencing techniques, including the definition of the marine cadastre concept, the necessity of integration of cadastral and topographical databases, the need to further develop distribution mechanisms for open communication systems and the development of appropriate linkages between the Asia and the Pacific spatial data infrastructure and other global initiatives.

10. Presentations from international scientific organizations highlighted the significant developments and advances in positioning techniques and high-resolution satellite images, such as Ikonos, EROS A and QuickBird, as well as other applications and technologies associated with geo-spatial information, in particular their involvement and contribution in support of spatial data infrastructure initiatives. Two presentations stressed the importance of data access and dissemination through Internet-based tools, such as portals and electronic atlases. It was asserted that a well-designed portal as a part of spatial data infrastructure could better provide easy data access and a prompt response in emergencies, and an Internet-based atlas might politically appeal to a given country. One presentation stressed the vital and basic role played by the spatial standards in the integration and interoperability of geographic information. In the development of such standards, international cooperation with organizations with a common objective, such as ISO/TC/211 and OpenGIS Consortium, is most essential and indispensable.

11. The deliberations of the three conference committees confirmed that the concept of national spatial data infrastructure was gaining recognition in the Asia and Pacific region as a fundamental asset of a country, equal to its roads, communication networks and other public utilities. It was also stressed that developing a successful national spatial data infrastructure must be seen as a socio-technical and socio-economic exercise rather than as a purely technical one. In other words, the challenge for the geographic information community is not only determining how to harness the enormous potential of geo-information technologies, but also having the ability to restructure national mapping agencies and other governmental organizations, to cooperate with one another and to create regional and global data infrastructure standards.

12. A list of the seven resolutions adopted by the conference and the proposed provisional agenda for the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific are attached in annexes I and II. The activities recommended by the Conference and those required for the preparation of the Seventeenth Conference that are deemed to be of a continuing nature have been included in the strategic framework for the biennium 2006-2007 under programme 7, subprogramme 5 (A/59/6 (Prog. 7)), and it is anticipated that they will be incorporated into the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007. Inclusion of those activities is not expected to give rise to additional expenditures. In the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, those activities, which are of a continuous nature, fall under section 9, Economic and social affairs.

Recommendations to the Economic and Social Council

13. In view of the continued and important contributions made by cartography, geo-information technologies and spatial data infrastructure applications to decision makers, planners, scientists and the public at large and the essential contribution the United Nations regional cartographic conferences for Asia and the Pacific and the Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific continue to provide to member States in the geographic information field, the Conference recommended that the Economic and Social Council:

(a) Endorse its recommendation that the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific be convened for five working days in 2006, with a primary focus on the continued and strengthened contribution of cartography and geographic information in support of the implementation of Agenda 21;

(b) Request the Secretary-General to take measures, where appropriate and within available resources, to implement the other recommendations made by the Sixteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific. In particular, The United Nations should continue to support surveying, mapping and spatial data infrastructure activities in the Asia and Pacific region and, inter alia, continue, within available resources, to facilitate the participation of the least developed countries and the small island developing States of the region.

Notes

[1] Australia, Bahrain, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, Fiji, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Jordan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Tuvalu, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

[2] International Cartographic Association, International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, International Federation of Surveyors, United Nations Human Settlements Programme and World Food Programme.

[3] *Report of the Fifteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, Kuala Lumpur, 11-14 April 2000* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.I.2), annex II.

[4] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution I, annex II.

Annex I

List of resolutions

1. Asia-Pacific spatial data infrastructure
2. Regional geodesy
3. Fundamental data
4. Cadastre and spatial data infrastructure
5. Capacity-building
6. Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific
7. Expression of gratitude to the host Government

Annex II

Provisional agenda for the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific

1. Opening of the Conference.
2. Election of the President and other officers of the Conference.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters:
   (a) Consideration and adoption of the rules of procedure;
   (b) Adoption of the agenda;
   (c) Establishment of technical committees and election of chairmen and other officers;
   (d) Organization of Conference work;
   (e) Credentials of representatives to the Conference.
4. Objectives of the Conference.
5. Report of the Permanent Committee on Geographic Information System Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific.
6. Conference reports:
   (a) Reports on the implementation of resolutions of the United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific;
   (b) Country reports.
7. Invited papers.
8. Reports of the technical committees of the Conference.
9. Review of the achievements of the Conference.
10. Provisional agenda of the Eighteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific.
11. Adoption of the report of the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

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Sixteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

In paragraph 8, page 3 of the document E/2004/57, line 12 should read: Geographical Survey Institute instead of Geological Survey Institute.

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Coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to the following themes

Coordinated and integrated United Nations system approach to promote rural development in developing countries, with due consideration to least developed countries, for poverty eradication and sustainable development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, cannot be attained unless rural development is accelerated. The present report analyses the role of the United Nations system in promoting a coordinated and integrated approach to rural development and makes concrete proposals on how to improve policy coherence at the international, regional and country levels. The report builds on the outcome of last year's Economic and Social Council high-level segment on rural development giving due consideration to the least developed countries and, in particular, to the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, which provides a guiding framework for coordination of support to the least developed countries.

* E/2004/100.

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I. Introduction[1]

1. At its high-level segment in 2003, the Economic and Social Council considered the theme "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development" and adopted a ministerial declaration, which stressed that the eradication of rural poverty and hunger was crucial for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Three quarters of the world's poor, including the majority of the over 700 million people in the least developed countries, live in rural areas. Rural development is thus a precondition for the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger.

2. The ministerial declaration emphasized that rural development should be pursued through an integrated approach, encompassing the economic, social and environmental dimensions, taking into account the gender perspective and consisting of mutually reinforcing policies and programmes. The approach should be balanced, targeted, situation-specific, locally owned, include local synergies and initiatives and be responsive to the needs of rural populations. The declaration welcomed the work of the organizations of the United Nations system in eradicating rural poverty and promoting rural development and called upon them to ensure that measures were implemented to simplify, harmonize and integrate assessment procedures and programming so as to reduce transaction costs and avoid additional procedural requirements for programme countries and enhance support for their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, especially those contained in the Millennium Declaration.

3. The importance of rural development for poverty eradication has also found renewed recognition outside the United Nations environs. A number of donor Governments, including the United States, Canada and Australia, as well as major financial institutions, including the World Bank, have recently revised and updated their rural development strategies. Several new commitments in support of rural and agricultural development were also made recently, including on the highest political level. At the Evian Summit of the Group of Eight industrialized countries in 2003, it was agreed to reverse the "decline of official development assistance to agriculture". More recently, the leaders of the African Union recognized the role of agriculture and rural development for achieving food security and economic growth in Africa at their Assembly session in February 2004 at Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and pledged to allocate 10 per cent of their national budgets to increase agricultural production. Also in February 2004, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) released a report analysing its operations in support of rural populations and activities during the past decade. The report concluded that lending to agriculture has decreased significantly between 1990 and 2001 and recommended that the IDB Executive Board update the Bank's agricultural policy and scale up support for rural poverty reduction.

4. Rural development has been addressed by the major United Nations conferences and summits, in particular at the World Food Summit (1996), the Millennium Summit (2000), the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (2001), the International Conference on Financing for Development (2002), the World Food Summit: five years later (2002), and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002). These conferences recognized the need

to create an enabling environment for rural poverty eradication and the development of rural areas and have advocated for a new political impetus in these fields.

5. Building on the framework provided by major United Nations conferences and summits, in particular the Millennium Summit, as well as the outcome of last year's high-level segment, the Council's coordination segment of 2004 will review the overall impact of this approach and focus on how the United Nations system can promote a coordinated and integrated approach to rural development at the international, regional and country levels. The report will give due consideration to the least developed countries and, in particular, to the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, which provides a guiding framework for coordination of support to the least developed countries. The present report should thus be read in conjunction with the report for this year's high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council entitled "Resource mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010".

II. Role of the United Nations system in promoting, with due consideration to the least developed countries, a coordinated and integrated approach to rural development at the international, regional and country levels

6. The United Nations system has a key coordination role in promoting rural development, taking into account regional and national specificities in programmatic and operational activities.

7. The United Nations system is guided by the broad framework of the Millennium Development Goals in promoting a coordinated and integrated approach to rural development and in ensuring complementarity among the different actors within and outside the United Nations system. In this context, United Nations system organizations are making efforts to make integrated rural development an integral part of the strategies to achieve the development goals, particularly the Millennium Development Goals.

8. The work of the United Nations in the area of rural development, in particular, through the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP) and other agencies, has enhanced coordination for rural development by defining a global agenda for rural development. The World Food Summit, the World Food Summit: five years later and the Millennium Development Goals, in particular, have led to renewed focus on rural development and highlighted the need for an integrated approach to rural development, one that encompasses the economic, social and environmental dimensions of rural development.

9. The importance of the agricultural sector in the structure of the economies of the least developed countries cannot be overemphasized. Agriculture remains the primary livelihood of the majority of the population in the least developed countries, and the most important sector of the economy. Economic growth, poverty reduction and food security in most least developed countries cannot be achieved in the

absence of a strong and dynamic food and agricultural sector, as a primary pillar in the strategy of overall economic growth and development.

10. The poverty trap in which the least developed countries are caught is characterized by vicious cycles at different levels, ranging from the household level to that of the international economy. At the domestic level, the least developed countries are trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, relatively high population growth and a rather high rate of environmental degradation. At the international level, they are stuck in a vicious cycle of heavy dependence on primary commodities, unstable and declining world market prices for non-oil primary commodities, low levels of export revenues, low levels of import capacities and unsustainable external debt.

11. An integrated approach to rural development across a broad front is required in order to effectively assist the least developed countries to break out of the poverty trap and make progress towards the international development goals. This approach includes actions by the least developed countries themselves and their development partners. National efforts and international support should be coordinated effectively so as to stimulate poverty reduction through rural development. Policy coherence is especially important for achieving adequate resource allocation, which is essential for integrated rural development. National efforts and international support need to be coordinated effectively to reverse the decline in official development assistance (ODA) and to create an enabling environment that encourages private sector investment in rural areas.

A. International level

1. Guidance by the Economic and Social Council on development issues

12. At the international level, the Economic and Social Council, as the central mechanism for the coordination of the United Nations system activities, has a major role to play in promoting policy coherence and collaboration on rural development and in ensuring the links between international processes and programmes. The Council's high-level segment last year has helped in bringing this issue at the forefront of international issues. The segment engaged key policy makers, financial institutions, regional commissions, heads of agencies and business and civil society leaders in a sustained dialogue and as a result its ministerial declaration on the subject gave new impetus to the work of the United Nations system in this key area.

13. Within its present coordination system, the Economic and Social Council could, working with the organizations of the United Nations system, including financial and trade institutions, increase collaboration for implementing the goals of major United Nations conferences and summits. The Council can help to determine how goals and actions related to rural development, which form an integral part of conference outcomes, can contribute to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It provides a forum for a practical exchange of views on successful experiences in promoting a coordinated approach to rural development and to mobilize support for activities in this field by all development partners, including Governments, United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector.

2. Role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme

14. The specific mandates of FAO, IFAD and WFP, consisting, respectively, of technical expertise, financial assistance and food aid, are highly complementary and provide great scope for cooperation and coordination at all levels. Collaboration is now part of the strategic planning of the three Rome-based agencies. The implementation of these strategies is guided by the complementary roles that FAO, IFAD and WFP play in supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. At the international level the three agencies are increasingly joining forces to promote agricultural growth and advocate for broad-based rural development, including a focus on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

Box 1

Existing national and international forums such as the United Nations System Network on Rural Development and Food Security, hosted by FAO and jointly monitored by IFAD, FAO, WFP and the International Land Coalition, can assist to exchange and disseminate information, experiences and best practices, reinforce ties between organizations of the United Nations system and other stakeholders and mobilize support for government efforts to implement rural development and food security programmes.

15. The final declaration of the World Food Summit: five years later (2002) calls on all parties to reinforce their efforts to "act as an international alliance against hunger". The alliance should be an association in which Governments and parliaments work with the international community, civil society organizations, the private sector and concerned individuals. It should build on the many existing initiatives and institutions that are already successfully engaged within their respective mandates in the fight against hunger. It offers a framework for all of them to join forces in giving the hungry a stronger voice and in responding to their concerns. Hence, the Rome-based agencies are working towards a stronger integration between the United Nations system network and the international alliance against hunger.

Box 2

FAO proposed the Anti-Hunger Programme, with a twin-track approach to achieve food security by combining policy reforms and investment in sustainable agriculture and rural development with measures to ensure immediate access to food by the neediest. It combines concrete measures to increase agricultural productivity and the up-take of appropriate technologies by poor rural communities, ensuring also access to food for the most needy through safety nets and other direct assistance. The intention of the Anti-Hunger Programme is notably to give higher priority to resource mobilization for agriculture in rural areas, as a source of livelihood for the majority of the poor.

16. As the task manager for sustainable agriculture and rural development (Chapter 14 of Agenda 21) and focal point for the sustainable agriculture and rural development initiative, FAO aims to build the capacities of rural communities, organizations and networks to improve access to resources, promote good practices for sustainable agriculture and rural development and foster fairer conditions of employment in agriculture. Specific activities are foreseen with IFAD and other partners to design, implement and evaluate new sustainable agriculture and rural development policy packages and practices in mountain regions. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development also recommended that sustainable agriculture and rural development be seen as essential to the implementation of an integrated approach to increasing food production and to enhancing food security and food safety in an environmentally sustainable way (see para. 40 below).

17. At the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey in 2002, FAO, IFAD and WFP presented a common strategic vision to achieve the global poverty and hunger goals. Similarly, in March 2004, the three Rome-based agencies presented a joint statement on joining forces to end hunger and poverty to President Jacques Chirac during a joint meeting convened following the Geneva declaration made on 30 January by Presidents Jacques Chirac (France), Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Brazil), and Ricardo Lagos (Chile) on the need for improved coordination between agencies and increasing financial resources to fight hunger and poverty.

18. Coordination of the work of agencies with regard to thematic areas is particularly important. The integrated approach to rural development advocated in the 2003 Ministerial Declaration of the Economic and Social Council encompasses the economic, social and environmental dimensions of rural development. Thematic issues such as HIV/AIDS, education, health care, the empowerment of women[2] and sustainable use of natural resources, such as water, all have a vital role to play in rural development, and none of the agencies can address all issues in their entirety.

19. In order to enhance synergy and eliminate duplication within the United Nations system, it is necessary to identify what each agency/body has been doing and must do at the international, regional and country levels to promote rural development in the least developed countries and other developing countries. This should be done in accordance with the mandate (specialization), and the financial, analytical and technical capacities of each of the agencies.

20. The International Fund for Agricultural Development's Rural Poverty Report 2001 identified critical operational areas where coordinated action among various agencies could yield positive outcomes in terms of poverty reduction through an integrated approach to rural development. The United Nations agencies concerned with institutional social and environmental issues, as well as economic development, thus have an important role to play in rural development. The International Labour Organization (ILO), for example, has been giving high importance to rural employment and is increasingly working together with FAO on this issue. A number of ILO programmes, such as those concerning labour-based approaches to infrastructure, micro- and small enterprise development, microfinance, enhancing market access, cooperatives, skills development, decent work and the informal economy, and local economic development, are relevant for fostering rural non-farm economic activities and generating employment through the diversification of the

rural economy. Work in these areas is to be further strengthened and more closely focused on poverty reduction.

21. Since employment-intensive investment using labour-based approaches supports pro-poor growth in rural areas, ILO is urging countries to recognize the crucial importance of employment by mainstreaming it into investment policy and poverty reduction strategies. The ILO programme on integrated rural accessibility planning and local economic development aims at strengthening institutions and mechanisms for local and regional planning. The ILO's work on local economic development is a good example of how an integrated approach to rural development can be put into practice. Enhancing market access for rural products can also help to improve income distribution within countries.

22. The HIV/AIDS pandemic threatens the social, economic and political stability in developing countries. The vast majority of people living with and affected by the pandemic live in rural areas. The three Rome-based agencies are working actively with other stakeholders to analyse the relationship between HIV/AIDS, food security and rural development, and to devise appropriate responses, including through direct assistance to the affectees living in developing countries. In October 2003, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) endorsed a report, prepared by an inter-agency working group co-led by WFP, IFAD and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS entitled "Organizing the United Nations response to the triple threat of food insecurity, weakened capacity for governance and AIDS in Southern Africa". The report calls upon United Nations agencies to help Governments achieve Millennium Development Goals targets. It highlights increased United Nations action to support community-based actions (safety nets, livelihoods, services), empower women and girls and respond to the orphaning crisis.

23. Education is recognized as another key area for rural development, and WFP is working actively with partners, both within and outside the United Nations system, to strengthen access to education in rural areas. The challenge of education as a vehicle for sustainable rural development is one of the main themes of the Education for All effort. Urban-rural disparities in educational investment and in the quality of teaching and learning are widespread and need to be redressed. Rural people and rural areas are not homogenous, and so, for education to be relevant, it needs to respond to the diversity of rural situations. Educational activities have to be linked to the specific needs of the rural community for skills and capacities to seize economic opportunities, improve livelihood and enhance the quality of life.

24. With a grant from IFAD, FAO is implementing a pilot project for farmer field schools in Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania that uses participatory hands-on learning techniques. Originally designed for the promotion of integrated pest management, farmer field schools have been operating for many years in Asia. IFAD projects include adult literacy training, principally targeted at women. About 20 per cent of the projects in Africa and 50 per cent of the IFAD/Belgian Survival Fund Joint Programme projects have literacy components. Efforts to tackle illiteracy among rural woman in Niger were recognized when an IFAD-financed literacy training booklet, the first of its kind to be produced in Fula (Fulani), was awarded the UNESCO prize in Seville.

Box 3
Education for Rural People

As a follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, FAO and UNESCO initiated a flagship on education for rural people, which has been instrumental in bringing international attention to education (formal, non-formal and informal) as a viable means for rural development and in viewing rural education in holistic terms, i.e., interrelationship between education and all other development activities. This partnership includes some member countries, United Nations entities and civil society. The programme seeks to address rural-urban disparities in education by building awareness of the importance of education for rural people as a crucial step to achieve the millennium goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving education for all. It works also to foster national capacity to plan and implement basic education plans to address learning needs of rural people.

25. Within the purview of the work of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on rural development, a special unit referred to as Universal Access and Rural Communications was established to focus on ensuring that more resources are directed towards projects designed to enhance the availability of information and communication technologies in rural areas. The Union promotes a cohesive approach by all parties involved in information and communication technology rural development work that will ensure that the objective of installing 5 main lines per 100 inhabitants and 5 Internet connections per 100 inhabitants as stated in the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, becomes a reality.

26. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) has developed relationships with other organizations in the United Nations system, such as ITU, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, to expand or improve communication services in various parts of the world. The alleviation of poverty cannot succeed without the necessary development of infrastructure, including postal services that are contributing to economic development and improving people's lives, especially in rural areas.

3. Promoting policy coherence and collaboration among the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions on rural development

27. The World Bank's Board of Directors endorsed a new agriculture and rural development strategy for the World Bank in October 2002, published in 2003 as *Reaching the Rural Poor*. It was motivated by a sharp decline in Bank Group lending for agriculture and rural development as well as by analytical work directed to this sector. The new strategy proposes re-engagement, but in new directions that address the issues of failed project approaches and highly distorted agricultural and rural development policies. After one and one-half years of implementation, there are several positive developments, as well as major challenges remaining. On the positive side, the donor community has followed the Bank's lead in re-engaging in

this sector, with many donors issuing new agriculture and rural development strategies, and expanding their assistance. World Bank lending for rural development increased by nearly 50 per cent in one year, to fiscal year 2003, reaching over US$ 7 billion. The strategy recognized that, to have an impact, such processes must be integral to national development strategy processes e.g., poverty reduction strategy papers, national development plans, etc.. The principal focus of this strategy has been to help countries strengthen the voice of the rural poor in national processes for agricultural and rural strategy formulation. The Bank's efforts are thus highly synergistic with the Rome-based agencies. The Bank is working actively with these and others in a broad-based global coalition to make the reduction of rural poverty a major focus for the coming decade. As a result of these efforts, a Global Platform for Rural Development was established in March 2003 and Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and FAO have agreed to provide a secretariat for the Platform's activities.

28. In another good example of coordination actions, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, an association of agencies and other public and private members supporting a system of 15 future harvest centres that work in more than 100 countries, aims at achieving sustainable food security and reducing poverty in developing countries through scientific research and research-related activities in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fisheries, policy and environment. It mobilizes cutting-edge scientific knowledge to reduce hunger and poverty, improve human nutrition and health, and protect the environment. The Consultation Group's research agenda focuses on both strategic and applied research. This agenda includes the entire range of problems affecting agricultural productivity and links these problems to broader concerns about poverty reduction, sustainable management of natural resources, protection of biodiversity, and rural development. All benefits of the research are kept within the public domain, and are available to all.

29. IFAD, FAO and WFP have been jointly exploring innovative ways of increasing the volume of funding available for improving food security and rural livelihoods and of building mechanisms for mobilizing international resources. Significant progress has been made in working with the Italian Government and middle-income highly indebted countries in developing programmes (Egypt, Ecuador and Peru), whereby bilateral debt is cancelled in return for borrower commitments to commit the resources (in local currency terms) that they would have used to amortize the debt for demand-driven rural development and food security programmes.

30. Also, FAO, IFAD, WFP and the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification have formed a partnership with the Italian Government to assist countries that are not included under the debt relief initiative for heavily indebted poor countries in switching funds from debt payments to fighting poverty and promoting sustainable development. This is being done through programmes and projects aimed at poverty reduction under the Millennium debt relief initiative.

31. More than a billion poor people lack access to the basic financial services essential for them to manage their precarious lives. Experience has shown that direct access to financial services affects the productivity, asset formation, income and food security of the rural poor, making rural finance a vital tool in poverty reduction

and rural development. Collaboration within the United Nations system encourages and supports innovations in rural finance. For example, IFAD set up a rural pro-poor innovation challenge with the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, a consortium of 28 public and private development agencies working together to expand access to financial services for the poor in developing countries.

4. Least developed countries

32. The agricultural sector in many least developed countries is very vulnerable to a variety of negative local impacts ranging from droughts, pest and diseases. As export of agricultural commodities constitutes a major source of income for both government and farmers, commodity price volatility represents a major obstacle to sustained economic growth in the least developed countries, and thereby poverty reduction. In the absence of any formal social-security safety net, the majority of the rural population engaged in agricultural export face a very difficult challenge in making their way out of poverty. The continued decline in the value of agricultural commodities, such as sugar, coffee, tea, cocoa and cotton, against strategic imports, such as oil and medicines, during the past two decades indicates that for sustained improvement in reducing rural poverty least developed countries will have to diversify their crops and products. This will of necessity require seed funding, capacity-building and technical support. Funding should come from a combination of international aid and domestic resources.

33. The market share of commodities that are crucial to many least developed countries, such as cocoa, coffee, timber and tea, in world trade has dropped by more than 30 per cent in the past 20 years. Furthermore, the agricultural exports of the least developed countries are concentrated on a very limited number of low-value-added primary commodities, most of them unprocessed, with a consistent downtrend in real prices. With little least developed country control on post-harvest transport, processing, marketing and distribution, the share of farmers or primary producers in least developed countries in the final consumer price is often below 10 per cent. Development partners of least developed countries aggravate the situation of these countries through trade-distorting policies and measures with regard to crucial commodities for least developed countries.

Box 4

The Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 emphasizes the key role of agriculture as the crucial sector in least developed countries, as it underpins food security, foreign exchange earnings, agro-industrial and rural development. For many least developed countries, the link between agricultural development and poverty reduction is considered as the most direct than with any other sector. The Programme of Action calls upon the least developed countries as well as their development partners — bilateral and multilateral donors, private sector and NGOs — to undertake specific and detailed actions to increase output productivity in the agricultural sector, diversify and expand lines of agricultural production, and invest in further processing raw commodities for increased local value-added, while promoting rural industries.

34. The Brussels Programme of Action is explicit in emphasizing the lack of food security as the most typical face of poverty in least developed countries. It states "Seventy percent of the poor and food-insecure are rural dwellers, many of whom are small farmers who produce on the brink of survival, or landless people trying to sell their labour." In a broader sense, the core problems of abject and widespread poverty, inequality, rapid population growth and rising unemployment have as a main cause the stagnation of economic activities and output in the rural areas.

35. The Programme of Action provides the United Nations system with a guiding framework for coordination of support to least developed countries in the various components of the Programme, including the building of productive capacities, i.e. the fourth commitment of the Programme. This commitment is crucial for the least developed countries, as it encompasses the key building blocks for economic growth and development, that is, infrastructure, enterprise development, agriculture and agro-industries, food security and rural development.

36. The Programme of Action therefore provides a common ground for the formulation of programmes and projects that support the building of productive capacities in the agricultural sector and rural development, in both farm and non-farm activities.

37. In the context of preparations for the eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNCTAD is preparing a partnership in the area of commodities that is of direct relevance in this regard. The partnership, which would take the form of an International Task Force on Commodities, would involve member States (both commodity-dependent developing countries and interested development partners, especially donors); international organizations (such as FAO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Trade Centre, UNDP, the Common Fund for Commodities and the World Bank); commodity-specific bodies (international commodity organizations and study groups); the private sector, in particular the major corporations engaged in the production, marketing and distribution of commodities; non-governmental organizations that promote action on commodity issues; and the academic community undertaking research on commodity problems and related solutions.

38. The core objective of the Task Force will be to facilitate the development, through a multi-stakeholder approach, of strategies and modalities for the sustainable development of commodity sectors in developing countries, and to enhance the contribution of commodities to overall development. It will forge partnerships between stakeholders through which practical approaches and concrete actions towards sustainable development can be designed and implemented. The Task Force will seek to advance the broad, internationally agreed development goals and targets of the United Nations, especially those established by the Millennium Declaration. Eradication of poverty and the special needs of the least developed and low-income countries will constitute the principal focus and benchmark for all activities of the Task Force.

39. Rather than creating a new, heavy bureaucracy, the Task Force will seek to build upon existing and emerging initiatives and activities, and help generate new ones in order to find practical solutions and produce results that will have a real impact on the situation of the poor in developing countries. It will focus on adding value to current work on commodities by helping to coalesce and scale up existing

efforts and promote innovative approaches, particularly market-based ones, by facilitating collaboration among all stakeholders.

B. Regional level

1. United Nations system support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development and other regional organizations in regional rural development

40. The three Rome-based agencies are all actively providing support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) process. Supporting such regional initiatives is an important means by which the United Nations system strengthens the focus on rural development in poverty reduction strategies and promotes an integrated approach to rural development. A cluster of United Nations agencies, of which IFAD is the rapporteur, is supporting NEPAD in the areas of agriculture, trade and market access through knowledge management, advocacy and capacity-building. Through the Special Programme for Food Security, FAO assists a growing number of developing countries that are determined to achieve the goals set at the World Food Summit and are looking to FAO and its partners for assistance.

41. Countries committed to reducing hunger should be encouraged to embark on nationwide multi-component national food security projects or programmes such as the Special Programme for Food Security, which would include some or all elements recommended in the Anti-Hunger Programme and could be funded by a variety of national and international sources. In line with the Anti-Hunger Programme and international alliance against hunger concepts, these national programmes would be supported by a national alliance of interested parties built, where possible, on existing groups including, in Africa, representatives of the NEPAD partners. In this programme, FAO's role is to assist regional economic groupings in formulating food security programmes that focus on the supranational dimensions of food security, especially agricultural trade facilitation, harmonization of agricultural policies and regional support to national food security efforts. It is in this context that FAO, together with other partners, has assisted the NEPAD secretariat in developing the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

42. IFAD's support to the NEPAD process aims at a synergetic cooperation of key actors to boost the process of poverty alleviation and development. For example, IFAD has provided considerable support to the participatory design and implementation of the agricultural component of NEPAD and has been using its role, both within and outside of the cluster, to advocate for the rural poor and civil society to get more systematically involved. FAO and IFAD have prepared support programmes for the NEPAD secretariat, which include the provision of technical assistance in organizing the participatory design of selected agricultural projects. This initiative is complemented by further support to civil society organizations and particularly farmers' organizations within the context of grass-roots capacity and institutional development projects all over the continent, as well as to apex organizations at the national and regional levels.

43. WFP has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the NEPAD secretariat, under which cooperation will be initiated on (a) food security and livelihood protection, (b) school feeding and basic education, (c) nutrition, (d) mother-and-child health, (e) HIV/AIDS, (f) vulnerability analysis, (g) emergency

needs assessment, (h) contingency planning, (i) emergency preparedness and response, and (j) national and regional capacity-building.

44. In Latin America, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Rural Development in Latin America and the Caribbean is the main institutional cooperation framework for the region's rural development. The Working Group attaches great importance to achieving better coordination and collaboration among international development organizations.

45. In Asia, inter-agency groups, such as rural development and food security forums, are active in several countries. With support from FAO, the regional Network for Development of Agricultural Cooperatives and the International Cooperative Alliance are active in promoting food security through agricultural cooperative development.

46. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is committed, within its area of competence, to lend its support to the NEPAD secretariat. So far, the NEPAD secretariat has received UNESCO's assistance for the preparation of the NEPAD Plan of Action in the field of education. UNESCO's Education Sector is actively involved in the work of the NEPAD Task Team on Human Resource Development.

2. Work/impact of regional commissions, regional development banks and regional financial institutions

47. Regional organizations have launched a number of activities for promoting rural development. In February 2004, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, FAO and the Asian Development Bank organized in Bangkok the "Regional High-Level Roundtable Meeting on Spearheading Sub-regional Programmes and Cooperation for Eradication of Poverty and Food Insecurity in Asia and the Pacific". The meeting adopted a declaration that encourages regional economic organizations and other institutions involved in economic integration with the participation of civil society organizations to spearhead the process of identifying the priority regional and subregional issues related to poverty, food security, agriculture and rural development and of formulating and implementing programmes to address these issues and concerns.

48. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) is part of the Inter-Agency Group for Rural Development coordinated by the Inter-American Development Bank. The Group has been invited by Brazil (2002), Panama (2002) and Peru (2003) to discuss their rural development strategies. Rural poverty alleviation and the reduction of inequality are central to this strategy. ECLAC also did pioneering work on the development of socio-economic indicators on the consequences of desertification processes. A set of 15 indicators was agreed upon by Argentina, Brazil and Chile, and was tested with the local population in regions undergoing desertification processes and with policy makers to determine their usefulness in portraying local conditions, identifying cause-and-effect relationships and guiding decision-making. These could also contribute to the formulation of overall agricultural policy.

49. In the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), several studies, expert group meetings, capacity-building workshops, field projects and programmes focused on social policies, agriculture, water, energy and technology.

Country studies were also produced to advise policy makers on rural poverty alleviation and on the organization and management of State farming. These were complemented by meetings and consultations aimed at monitoring, assessing and evaluating rural development programmes and projects in the countries of the region. ESCWA activities also covered projects implemented to develop sustainable water and energy supplies and promote decentralized electrification and renewable energy systems to rural areas, and agricultural extension, agricultural marketing programmes and rural financial institutions, as well as encouraging the establishment of credit institutions and the development of extension institutions in some member countries. IFAD has also a longstanding partnership with the League of Arab States. Aid to countries of the region totals US$ 3.5 billion and the funds have been used in a collaborative effort with Arab financial institutions. IFAD plays a significant role in supporting interregional initiatives and has established relations with the specialized agencies of the League and other regional institutions, including the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development and the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Drylands.

50. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) deploys the following modalities and services to support its work: policy analysis and advocacy; enhancing partnerships; technical assistance; communication and knowledge-sharing; and supporting subregional activities. Policy-related analytical work is central to the overall work of ECA. Drawing on this work, the Commission serves as a policy advocate on critical development issues, including on rural development, to encourage the initiatives and reforms necessary for economic and social advancement in Africa. The Commission has progressively strengthened its partnership agenda with a wide spectrum on constituencies, both within and outside the continent. In order to improve coherence and synergies in the United Nations, particularly around the system's response to NEPAD, ECA convenes annual regional consultations of United Nations agencies working in Africa. The consultations, which bring together all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes working on Africa, provide a forum for information-sharing as well as enhanced collaboration on Africa.

3. United Nations system support to South-South cooperation

51. South-South cooperation, as an important element of international cooperation for development, offers viable opportunities for developing countries in the pursuit of sustainable development and poverty eradication. South-South approaches have a major role to play in furthering development, provided they receive the consistent support of Governments of both developed and developing countries and of international organizations.

52. South-South cooperation is particularly crucial in the area of water and agricultural development since control by the poor over water is essential for the realization of the full benefits of farmland. IFAD is working with the African Development Bank, FAO, the International Water Management Institute and the World Bank to identify new approaches to investment in the agricultural water-supply sector. Grants have been awarded to national and international agricultural centres to generate and test new approaches through research on participatory irrigation management programmes; the use of brackish and saline water; farming harvesting; the facilitating of collaboration on transboundary water; and capacity-building for management of water demand.

53. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is planning to carry out a study of implementation modalities for South-South cooperation and solidarity in the filed of education as well as a feasibility study on the creation of a fund for a programme of South-South solidarity in education. The two studies will be submitted to the Executive Board at its one hundred seventieth session with a view to launch pilot projects on South-South solidarity in six developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

54. Inter-agency cooperation by UNESCO and FAO and collaboration with partner institutions, such as the International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education in China, in organizing international seminars on education for rural people with participants from Africa and Asia contributed to fostering South-South cooperation.

55. The potential of the United Nations system to support South-South cooperation has not been fully realized, mainly due to the inadequacy of financial and human resources in existing organizational mechanisms within the United Nations system. It is thus essential to address the need to revitalize and consolidate the South-South platform, build stronger South institutions at the global level, bridge the knowledge and information gap, broaden partnerships and mobilize global support for South-South cooperation. The coordination of South-South cooperation should be focused more on catalysing and monitoring South-South efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals. The UNDP Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, which serves as the focal point and coordinator of South-South cooperation in the United Nations system, has a crucial role to play in this regard.

4. Least developed countries

56. Considering the structural weaknesses of least developed countries in productive and trading capacities and in a number of cases the landlockedness of least developed countries, regional and subregional integration schemes provide actionable instruments for promoting expansion of agricultural production and for enhancing food security at the national and subregional levels. The potential for expanding least developed countries participation in intraregional trade in agricultural and agro-industry products has not yet been fully exploited, although that avenue and strategy would best address the production hindrances related to the small size of their domestic markets.

57. Promotion of intraregional trade as well as South-South trade from which least developed countries can derive substantial trade gains will therefore require greater opening up of subregional and regional markets for agricultural and agro-industrial products from least developed countries, vigorous efforts and programmes for production line diversification, i.e. horizontal diversification, and increased domestic inputs in product processing, i.e. vertical diversification, and substantial investment in physical and economic infrastructures.

C. Country level

1. Integration of rural development issues/poverty eradication objectives into poverty reduction strategy papers and common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework and national strategies for food security

58. Common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) provide a vehicle for the United Nations to work jointly with Governments and other partners to identify how United Nations actions can support national efforts. At the same time, in most of the least developed countries the poverty reduction strategy papers are becoming an increasingly important vehicle for coordination between the Government, bilateral donors and international organizations. Strengthening the rural dimension of the strategies is essential for promotion of an integrated approach to rural development. The United Nations should be prepared to engage actively in the process, and through its multilateral character and broad in-country expertise, is well placed to build capacity of and provide neutral policy advice to national Governments in developing and implementing the poverty reduction strategy papers.

59. There is already a considerable degree of coordination among United Nations agencies, both through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and among the individual agencies. With respect to the Rome agencies and the complementarity of their expertise, every effort is being made to expand cooperation among the agencies. This ranges from joint programming of projects to collaboration of in-country processes to project development. In China, for example, eight joint IFAD/WFP development projects have been developed, approved and implemented with joint targeting, design, supervision, monitoring and evaluation. In Mongolia, for example, IFAD assisted in the review of the agriculture and rural development section of the poverty reduction strategy paper, and, with the World Bank, supported regional seminars to broaden the participation of local government and civil society in the development of the paper. Consequently, the final poverty reduction strategy paper contains a much stronger strategy for agriculture and rural development.

60. On the basis of national development strategies and/or poverty reduction strategy papers, considerable scope exists for forging broad alliances for rural development, in the context of a sector-wide approach or other sector-specific initiatives. An example of a sectoral partnership of this nature can be found in Ethiopia, where cooperation has been established between a broad range of stakeholders, including the World Bank, WFP and FAO (known as the coalition for food security) to develop a multi-annual predictable safety net to address risk and vulnerability for the poor, predominantly in rural areas. The United Nations should participate actively and take the lead when appropriate.

61. The national thematic groups of the United Nations System Network on Rural Development and Food Security also play an active role in contributing to identify national rural development and food security issues and priorities, focusing programme and strategy development within the context of UNDAF, and in designing precise interventions and projects. In the framework of the international alliance against hunger, national alliances should also become key actors for advocacy and dialogue with civil society organizations.

2. United Nations system's work with civil society, community-based organizations and cooperatives

62. The United Nations, using its unique place in the development community, needs to increase its efforts to bring together different actors, including Governments, bilateral agencies, international and national NGOs, the private sector, academic institutions and community-based organizations and cooperatives in the pursuit of rural development. These actors, in partnership with the poor, have been active in implementing strategies to support the livelihood of rural families and promote agricultural production that could assure food security and fight poverty. Cooperatives, as facilitators of purchasing, production, processing, marketing, savings and credit, occupy a special niche in rural development. The United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the International Cooperative Alliance and the International Federation of Agricultural Producers collaborate under the umbrella of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives.

63. A key factor for rural development involves empowerment through voice. At the country level, the interest of the rural poor should be fully reflected in the common country assessment and UNDAF processes, as well as in poverty reduction strategy papers by promoting direct participation of genuinely representative rural organizations, and directly articulating key rural development concerns. Synergies between the United Nations system organizations and civil society, and NGOs in particular, in poverty-reduction initiatives in rural areas have proved to be positive. Non-governmental organizations working with United Nations agencies and in partnership with the rural poor, are useful agents in implementing programmes and strategies to support the livelihood of rural families and promote agricultural production that could assure food security and reduce poverty.

64. Removing gender inequalities and securing access to natural resources for the poor are prerequisites for economic growth and likewise essential elements of an integrated approach to rural development. Establishment and support of community organizations and local women's groups are an important means to improve women's economic and social standing. A good example of United Nations system coordination in this area is the collaboration of IFAD and WFP in Bangladesh, where joint projects with a strong civil society component are aimed at increasing fisheries and aquaculture production and income for the rural poor, in particular rural women.

3. Least developed countries

65. Triangular United Nations-public-private partnerships to strengthen productive capacities of farming and non-farming rural small and medium enterprises, need to be given a more prominent role in United Nations development assistance, as called for in the Brussels Programme of Action. These triangular partnerships and their synergies can boost technological progress and innovation in agriculture, including technological adaptation and development of appropriate technologies, as well as mechanization of agricultural operations. In this regard, the accumulated knowledge in the United Nations system and access to best practices in the developing world could stir South-South cooperation and exchange of experiences in the area of agriculture and rural development.

66. A good example of expanded partnership is the recently created United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, whose aim is to "identify, highlight and promote replication of successful business policies and practices that are both profitable and promote social and economic advancement of poor people in the rural areas". UNDP, among others, is actively involved in the work of the Alliance. The basic thrust of the Alliance is that businesses, whether domestic or international, can have a positive influence in achieving the Millennium Development Goals with regard to rural poverty. The Alliance, whose pilot exercise is concentrated on Madagascar, would help harmonize the profit motives of the private sector with internationally agreed development goals and national rural development objectives. The Alliance brings together existing United Nations-wide programmes and projects, and a number of business associations with the aim of maximizing synergy in the recipient least developed countries.

III. Conclusion and recommendations

67. The potential contribution of rural development in the realization of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, is being increasingly acknowledged. However, there are certain issues that need to be taken into account while assimilating the goal of integrated rural development in the broader framework of the Millennium Development Goals. How to ensure complementarity between the strategies to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and rural development-related activities? How to promote efficient allocation of resources and optimal utilization of capacities of various organizations and actors?

68. While grappling with these questions, the United Nations system, Governments and other relevant actors are trying to develop an integrated approach for their activities. There are, inter alia, three important elements to this approach: firstly, integration of various dimensions of rural development and the development goals should be based on a coherent strategy, a clear division of labour and mutually reinforcing programmes of various organizations; secondly, there should be a coherent framework for capacity-building activities and projects in the area of rural development; and thirdly, regional cooperation needs to be promoted as a core element of this approach.

- **Promote further integration of rural development into the operational activities and development policies of all United Nations agencies with mandates dealing with economic, social and environmental dimensions of this issue.**
- **The United Nations system should be encouraged to design a coherent capacity-building programme for rural development. Such a programme needs the support of international, regional and national institutions.**
- **The United Nations system organizations should be provided with sufficient resources to promote integrated rural development, including through enhanced flows of official development assistance dedicated to rural development.**
- **The extensive cooperation among the Rome-based agencies in the areas of programming and project development and implementation is welcome and should be further expanded.**

- **The United Nations system agencies should strengthen their cooperation in promoting the empowerment of rural women at all levels and in all aspects of rural development, including agriculture, nutrition and food security.**

- **Access to rural finance is a critical component of rural development. Collaboration among all finance partners is hence essential and should be further pursued.**

- **Within the framework of the initiatives of education for rural people and education for sustainable development, advocacy and mobilizing partnerships for education for rural people should be promoted by concentrating on strategic global, regional and international events, and these should also be encouraged within the countries.**

- **The United Nations system should further support regional initiatives in order to strengthen its focus on rural development in poverty reduction strategies and to promote an integrated approach to rural development.**

- **The United Nations regional commissions should explore possibilities for interregional cooperation, particularly for sharing best practices.**

- **South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation need to be further promoted in the area of rural development.**

- **Since employment-intensive investment using labour-based approaches supports pro-poor growth in rural areas, countries should therefore recognize the crucial importance of employment by mainstreaming it into investment policy and poverty reduction strategies, including these focused on rural area development.**

- **A cohesive and coordinated approach should be promoted by all parties involved in information and communication technologies rural development work to ensure that the objective of installing 5 main lines per 100 inhabitants and 5 Internet connections per 100 inhabitants as stated in the Brussels Programme of Action, becomes a reality.**

- **The United Nations system organizations should continue to promote partnerships among Governments, bilateral agencies, international and national NGOs, the private sector, academic institutions and community-based organizations and cooperatives in the pursuit of rural development, including through the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development.**

Notes

[1] The report has been prepared with contributions from United Nations system agencies, in particular FAO, IFAD, WFP and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

[2] The issue of gender mainstreaming is addressed by the second theme of this year's coordination segment. See report of the Secretary-General on the Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 97/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.

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Coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system: review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Coordination, programme and other questions: mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Economic and Social Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/49 of 24 July 2003. It assesses the implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 throughout the United Nations system and at the intergovernmental level. The report provides an overall analysis and highlights continuing gaps in and challenges to gender mainstreaming that the Council may wish to focus on in the review and appraisal.

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I. Introduction

1. Gender mainstreaming was endorsed as a strategy for promoting equality between women and men by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The Economic and Social Council adopted agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system at its coordination segment on 18 July 1997.[1] The importance of the gender mainstreaming strategy was reiterated by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session in June 2000.[2]

2. The Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions defined gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels, and as a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. The Council provided principles for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the United Nations system and made specific recommendations on the intergovernmental process, institutional requirements for gender mainstreaming, including the role of gender units and focal points, capacity-building and gender mainstreaming in the integrated follow-up to global United Nations conferences.

3. The Economic and Social Council, in its decision 2003/287 of 24 July 2003, decided to undertake, during its coordination segment in 2004, a review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of its agreed conclusions 1997/2. In its resolution 2003/49 of 24 July 2003,[3] the Council requested the Secretary-General to include in his report recommendations for the review and appraisal.

4. The present report is submitted in response to the request of the Council. It is based on an analysis of information received from United Nations entities,[4] the work of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, as well as previous reports of the Secretary-General to the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council, and the General Assembly since 1997. It assesses progress in the integration of gender perspectives into all policies and programmes throughout the United Nations system and at the intergovernmental level. The report provides an overall analysis and highlights continuing gaps in and challenges to gender mainstreaming that the Council may wish to focus on in follow-up to the review and appraisal.[5]

II. Gender mainstreaming in United Nations entities

A. Policy, strategy and budget frameworks

5. Most entities have developed policies on gender equality which use gender mainstreaming as the major strategy for achieving their goals. Specific policies on gender equality are needed to provide critical guidance on gender mainstreaming, indicate senior management commitment and establish accountability. Many policies were developed in connection with the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995

or its follow-up, the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000. Several United Nations entities have developed new policies and strategies or revised existing ones in recent years. A number of entities have not yet adopted gender equality policies or strategies; some are currently in the process of developing such policies or have recently been urged to do so by their governing bodies.

6. Some newly developed or revised gender equality policies include implementation tools and methodologies, as well as monitoring mechanisms. Some entities have also developed implementation or action plans for existing gender equality policies and strategies. In a number of entities, gender equality policies or strategies were developed in the context of the preparation of medium-term plans or programme budgets.

7. The involvement of different categories of staff, in particular senior management, in the elaboration of gender policies and strategies has proven to be crucial for increased commitment to implementing gender mainstreaming and ensuring accountability and systematic monitoring of its practical application. The linkages between the goal of gender equality and the overall goals of the entity have to be established and the implications for policy and programme development clearly outlined. Roles, responsibilities, including those of managers at all levels, and accountability mechanisms should be explicitly defined, together with the institutional arrangements, including gender specialist resources and capacity-building approaches. An action plan should be developed which outlines measurable goals for all areas of activity, with time frames and indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

8. While the existence of gender equality policies in United Nations entities has contributed to increased awareness and provided a necessary framework for gender mainstreaming, practical implementation remains a challenge. The gap remaining between policy and implementation is a major challenge, which should be specifically addressed in the review and appraisal.

9. Experience has shown that, in addition to the important overall framework provided by the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions and the specific gender equality policies developed within entities, there is also a need to incorporate gender perspectives explicitly into sector policies and strategies. Measurable goals should be established, with time frames and indicators for monitoring and evaluation, as well as mechanisms for holding staff accountable for gender mainstreaming in sector areas.

10. Many entities have made efforts to integrate gender perspectives into sectoral policies and strategies. However, attention to gender perspectives is not systematic in all areas covered by the mandates of United Nations entities. Gaps remain, for example, in poverty eradication, macroeconomic development, energy, sanitation, infrastructure, social protection, rural development, and peace and security. Without specific attention to gender perspectives at the sector policy and strategy level, it is difficult to provide a consistent focus on gender perspectives at the operational level.

11. Not all entities have systematically paid attention to gender perspectives in their programme budgets. Even where entities have carried out extensive work promoting gender equality, these efforts have not always been adequately reflected

in programme planning and budgets. The introduction of results-based budgeting throughout the United Nations system has provided opportunities for increasing attention to gender perspectives in the preparation of medium-term plans, programme budgets and multi-year funding frameworks. Efforts have been undertaken to link gender equality policies and strategies to overall policy goals and allocate financial resources to gender mainstreaming in different sector areas.

12. An inter-agency task force focused on gender mainstreaming in programme budget processes from 1999 to 2003.[6] Case studies were carried out in 14 entities and efforts made to increase collaboration between programme managers, budget staff and gender specialists in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of programme budgets. The work of the task force led to increased attention to gender perspectives in recent budget documents across the system.

13. In some entities, financial resources for gender mainstreaming have increased since 1997. Other entities have reported that overall budget cuts have led to decreased resources to support gender mainstreaming. Specific challenges have been experienced in terms of funding the gender specialists required to provide advice, support and capacity-building.

14. It has proven difficult to assess allocation of resources to gender mainstreaming. Some entities have made specific allocations for gender mainstreaming, particularly for institutional development activities such as training or development of guidelines and other materials. Other entities expect that attention to gender perspectives will be covered by overall budget allocations. Experience has shown that explicit attention to the resources required for gender mainstreaming is important for successful implementation. Entities which have developed policies and action plans for gender mainstreaming without attention to resource allocations have been constrained in implementation.

15. Challenges with regard to measurement include that of quantifying the exact amount of funding utilized in efforts to make gender perspectives an integral part of all activities. Even where resources for gender mainstreaming have increased, it is not always possible with existing monitoring and reporting systems to ascertain how much of the available funding is being spent on gender mainstreaming activities. Actual spending can also be directly related to levels of capacity for integrating gender perspectives into programmes activities.

16. A number of entities have been dependent on extrabudgetary resources for gender mainstreaming and some have recently lost this support. Use of extrabudgetary funding can present both opportunities and challenges. Extrabudgetary resources are difficult to predict and may not enhance the sustainability of gender mainstreaming efforts in the long term. On the other hand, in the short term, extrabudgetary resources have made possible important initiatives in support of gender mainstreaming, including in the area of capacity-building and development of resource materials, which have had a positive impact on gender mainstreaming.

B. Programmes and operational activities

17. Since the adoption of the agreed conclusions in 1997, United Nations entities have made considerable efforts to incorporate gender perspectives in their

programmes and operational activities. Diverse gender mainstreaming initiatives at the operational level have been undertaken by United Nations entities, including funds and programmes, specialized agencies and Secretariat departments that engage in technical cooperation programmes. Entities have worked at the operational level to draw attention to gender perspectives in data collection, research and analysis, and training activities undertaken across the system.

18. Progress has been made in gender mainstreaming in sector areas where systematic consideration of gender perspectives had not taken place prior to 1997, including peace and security, humanitarian issues and reconstruction work, democratic governance, information and communication technologies, and HIV/AIDS.

19. Gaps between policies and programming — that is, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation — still exist in many sector areas. Even where gender concerns are integrated into the design of programmes and operational activities, this does not always translate into gender-sensitive implementation. Despite the availability of materials, resources and tools on gender mainstreaming, programme officers and field staff of many entities lack capacity to use these tools in their daily work and implement gender mainstreaming. The documentation and dissemination of practical experience, lessons learned and good practices is critical for successful implementation of gender mainstreaming in programmes and operational activities.

20. The monitoring by headquarters of progress in the field is a major challenge, especially at the levels of outcomes and long-term impact. Results-based reporting systems have supported more accurate monitoring. However, difficulties persist in accurately capturing cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality.

21. As Governments make efforts to address gender issues in their programmes, the demand for technical support and capacity-building at the country and regional levels has risen. Resources have, however, remained limited. The need for greater coordination and collaboration among entities on gender mainstreaming in operational activities has become increasingly apparent. The establishment of United Nations country team structures and theme groups, including gender theme groups, has provided opportunities to enhance the integration of cross-cutting issues, including gender perspectives, into programmes and operational activities. Resident Coordinators have an important role to play in ensuring the commitment of country teams to systematic gender mainstreaming. Assessment of annual reports by Resident Coordinators reveals that capacity-building initiatives to sensitize government officials and United Nations staff and NGOs, have included training on gender-responsive budgeting and legislation. Other initiatives were undertaken to support the development of national capacity on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, including for national statistics offices on sex-disaggregated data.

22. A recent survey reported an increase in the number of country-level gender theme groups.[7] The activities of these groups cover advocacy, technical support, capacity-building and community-level interventions. Gender theme groups have, however, faced constraints due to limited mandates, lack of capacity and lack of seniority of their members.

23. Less has been done to ensure that other country theme groups, for example on HIV/AIDS, give adequate attention to gender perspectives. Theme groups for other

sectoral areas should include gender specialists who can provide technical advice and support.

24. Operational instruments constitute important entry points for the integration of cross-cutting issues, including gender equality, into development processes. Progress in mainstreaming gender perspectives into Common Country Assessment (CCA) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) processes has been evidenced by the positive changes in the CCA/UNDAF guidelines — from the acknowledgement of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue in 1999, to establishing gender equality as one of the guiding principles in 2002. The importance of incorporating attention to the gender inequalities identified in the CCA into the development assistance framework was highlighted in the revised guidelines of 2003. However, despite progress made to include gender perspectives in these guidelines, major gaps still exist in the integration of gender perspectives into CCA/UNDAF documents and in country programming follow-up. The attention to gender issues remains limited to a few sectoral areas, such as education, health and microeconomic issues. Gender perspectives are not systematically addressed in other critical areas, such as macroeconomics, taxation, employment, agriculture, transport, water, environment and housing.

25. Successful mainstreaming of gender perspectives in CCAs/UNDAFs requires systematic use of gender analysis and sex-disaggregated statistics; consultation with national machineries for the advancement of women and with women's groups and networks; and formulation of concrete recommendations to address the gender inequalities identified. The Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, should be utilized as critical resources in the process.

26. A recent desk review[8] found that the proportion of poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) that gave attention to gender inequalities increased substantially in 2003 compared with 2002. United Nations entities can provide effective support to gender mainstreaming in PRSPs, in collaboration with national machineries for the advancement of women, and women's groups and networks. The United Nations can raise gender issues in the country dialogue, promote access to gender analysis methodologies and tools, provide capacity-building in monitoring and implementation, and fund gender experts.

27. United Nations entities also have an important role to play in joint staff assessments in the preparation of PRSPs. The guidelines for joint staff assessments emphasize the importance both of ensuring the participation of women's groups in the PRSP process and of identifying the gender perspectives of poverty. However, based on a review of joint staff assessments of 21 interim PRSPs and 33 PRSPs, there were inconsistencies in both the quality and quantity of attention to gender perspectives. A World Bank review on gender in the PRSP in 2001 found that fewer than one quarter of joint staff assessments of interim PRSPs recommended further diagnosis, actions or monitoring related to gender equality.[9] Since the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund rely on joint staff assessment analyses when they approve PRSPs, the assessments are an important leverage point for ensuring that gender perspectives are reflected in PRSPs.

28. Increased attention is being given to the incorporation of gender perspectives in the Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal Process (CAP) led by the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Progress has been made since the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) adopted the CAP guidelines in 1994, in which no reference was made to gender equality. A number of reviews have been carried out since then to further improve these guidelines which have highlighted the lack of attention to gender perspectives. The revised guidelines of 2003 also benefited from a report commissioned by the IASC Task Force on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance to review gender mainstreaming in the CAP. The report emphasized major gaps in gender analysis and sex-disaggregated data in CAP documents and the lack of concrete initiatives to promote gender equality. The report also identified the need for further capacity-building and training on the integration of gender perspectives. OCHA is currently carrying out a review of the 1999 IASC gender policy in time for the humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2004.

29. National Millennium Development Goal reports present trends and identify achievements and continuing challenges. The preparation of these reports provide an important opportunity for raising awareness, forming alliances and developing national capacity on gender mainstreaming, and for assessing the extent to which gender perspectives are taken into consideration in national development policies. Recent assessments[10] indicate that country-level reports have focused on education and health and, to a lesser extent, on economic and political participation. It is important to consider gender equality as critical for the achievement of all Millennium Development Goals, rather than solely in the context of Millennium Development Goal 3. Constraints are faced in relation to data analysis and capacity-building. These are being addressed by a number of entities, including through the development of indicators and monitoring methodologies that take gender perspectives into account.

30. A recent assessment of national Millennium Development Goal reports undertaken by UNDP in 13 countries concludes that gender issues were not reflected as a cross-cutting issue in any of the reports. Only in relation to Goal 3, which specifically deals with gender equality, had gender issues been consistently addressed across countries.

C. Institutional arrangements

31. United Nations entities have developed institutional mechanisms to facilitate effective implementation of gender mainstreaming, including specialist resources and gender focal points, capacity-building activities, methodologies and tools, statistics and indicators, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

1. Gender specialist resources

32. The use of gender specialist resources has varied considerably across the United Nations system since 1997. Common challenges have, however, been experienced with regard to level of positions, mandates, access to resources and decision-making, and the extent of senior management support. Many larger United Nations entities have gender advisers and/or gender units. A number of entities have established internal or external advisory bodies with high-level participation. These groups guide policy-making and programming. In general, specialist resource levels have remained constant since 1997. Some entities have seen an increase in gender

specialists, while a number have reported a decrease in resources, including because of reorganization.

33. Experience has shown that the need for specialist support can increase with the introduction of gender mainstreaming and the shift of responsibility for promoting gender equality to all staff, including senior management. Gender specialists should not be seen as solely responsible for gender mainstreaming. Their role is to support senior managers in fulfilling their management responsibilities for gender mainstreaming. Gender specialists should promote, support and monitor progress in gender mainstreaming. Technical advice and support, including on methodologies and tools for gender analysis and capacity-building, is critical. For gender specialists to perform their roles effectively, however, they require adequate allocation of resources, clear mandates and strategic location within organizations. In particular, they require the strong support of senior management.

34. A common practice throughout the system has been the establishment of networks of gender focal points both at headquarters and in the field. Focal points are normally staff in technical work units who are assigned to spend part of their time promoting, supporting and monitoring gender mainstreaming. An inter-agency study[11] carried out in 2001 identified a number of serious constraints faced by gender focal points. Most gender focal points were women (over 90 per cent) at junior level. Many had no prior experience, expertise or interest in gender issues. In many cases their roles and responsibilities were unclear and were not reflected in their work plans. Their access to decision-making and resources was limited. The gender focal points had generally received no training and support systems (such as active networks) were not in place. This limited the effectiveness of the focal points. These constraints continue to exist.

35. Some entities have found, however, that gender focal points can play a significant role in supporting gender mainstreaming if an enabling environment is developed which addresses the constraints outlined above. In particular, functioning networks, with support provided from headquarters to field-level gender focal points, have proven useful. Entities have stressed the value of involving more senior staff members in gender focal point networks. The need for a greater gender balance has also been emphasized. Some entities have found that rotation of gender focal point responsibilities can contribute to increasing the number of gender-sensitive staff.

36. Entities have also developed electronic gender equality knowledge networks, linking gender focal points and specialists at headquarters and in regional and country offices, to further the development of capacity and institutional memory.[12]

37. Catalytic support for gender mainstreaming has also been provided throughout the United Nations system by the entities specializing in gender equality, including the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) in the form of advocacy, advice, resources and the development of pilot activities.

2. Capacity-building, including development of methodologies and tools

38. One of the main areas of activity undertaken across the United Nations system to support gender mainstreaming has been capacity-building. The majority of entities have invested in training programmes for staff and partners and the development of methodologies and tools. Training programmes and resource materials have been developed for different categories of staff: budget staff, technical and sectoral staff, senior managers, and gender specialists and focal points. Different types of training have been used, including generic gender mainstreaming training and training specifically tailored to sectoral areas. A variety of training methodologies and tools have been developed. A number of entities have compiled training resources and other tools for gender mainstreaming on their web sites.[13]

39. Capacity-building efforts in the United Nations have not always been as effective as could be desired. While some entities have reported successful outcomes of their training programmes, in many entities training programmes have been organized on an ad hoc basis, with little institutional follow-up. Greater attention must be given to the evaluation of impact. Training should also be more specifically tailored to the needs of participants. Sector-specific training should provide guidance on incorporating gender perspectives in activities and tasks that participants are involved in on a day-to-day basis. Gender analysis methodologies are only useful if advice is provided on how they can be practically applied in the work of participants.

40. Some entities have made efforts to incorporate gender perspectives in existing training programmes, for example for peacekeeping personnel. Gender mainstreaming modules have been integrated into induction sessions for new staff. This has increased awareness of responsibilities and accountability for gender mainstreaming. Further efforts need to be made to influence training programmes in areas such as poverty reduction, macroeconomics and sustainable development, in order to develop greater awareness of the linkages between gender perspectives and those areas.

41. United Nations entities have developed resources and tools for gender mainstreaming. Manuals or guidelines exist for almost every area of work covered by the United Nations system. They include checklists and briefing notes. The inter-agency web site womenwatch has recently established a directory of resources that includes training materials and other resources on gender mainstreaming.[14] The increased exchange of resources across entities of the system is an important means of capacity-building. In some entities, however, a remaining challenge is the fact that while methodologies and tools have been developed for many different sectors, many of these methodologies and tools are inadequately utilized. There has been insufficient monitoring and evaluation of the utilization and relevance of existing resources.

42. A major challenge to effective gender mainstreaming is that gender analysis is not systematically utilized. Even where analysis is carried out, the results are not fully integrated into planning and resource allocations. This challenge has to be addressed by more effective capacity-building activities and increased support from gender specialists.

3. Sex-disaggregated data, gender-specific information and indicators

43. Entities have placed emphasis on the collection, analysis and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender-specific information, as well as on the related development of indicators. Efforts in the field of sex-disaggregated data, gender-specific information and gender-sensitive indicators have taken on increased importance in the context of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the elaboration and implementation of operational instruments, such as CCAs, UNDAFs, and PRSPs. Recently, efforts have been made to develop gender-sensitive indicators for measuring progress in the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals. It is too early to evaluate the extent to which the use of newly developed indicators has influenced policy-making and programming and gender equality outcomes. It is, however, important to develop criteria for monitoring and evaluating such impacts.

44. Progress has been made with regard to sex-disaggregated data and indicators in the field of socio-demographic, education and health statistics. Gaps remain in economic statistics, as well as for migration, energy, water, agriculture and food production, urban and rural development issues, population issues, HIV/AIDS, and information and communication technologies.

45. Several entities have developed statistical databases that are available on the Internet.[15] Many entities produce and disseminate materials for policy makers and the general public, for example periodic reports on major trends and emerging issues, which include an analysis of sex-disaggregated data, gender-specific information and indicators.

46. Several inter-agency initiatives have been undertaken to build up the capacity, commitment and resources of both staff and development partners in the area of statistics and indicators. The five regional commissions have played a leading role in increasing attention to gender mainstreaming in the area of statistics and building the capacity of national statistical institutes.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

47. Most United Nations entities have identified the area of monitoring and evaluation as one of the weakest elements in the implementation of gender mainstreaming. Challenges include a lack of regular reporting; inappropriate monitoring systems; lack of access to and use of sex-disaggregated data, gender-specific information and indicators; and failure to utilize the results of monitoring and evaluation exercises to inform policy and programme development.

48. Many entities have conducted specific baseline studies, surveys, audits or evaluations on gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Operational entities have pointed to the difficulties of headquarters monitoring of progress in country or regional offices. Entities also stressed the potential value of participatory gender assessments and evaluations, including mid-term reviews, that involve major stakeholders and beneficiaries. These enhance policy planning, programme implementation and follow-up, and contribute to organizational accountability. Entities reported, however, that insufficient capacity of staff and partners was a major obstacle.

49. Most monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming is carried out through specific gender evaluations, audits, assessments or surveys. To a lesser extent, attention is given to the monitoring of progress in gender mainstreaming

through regular evaluation and reporting processes. A lack of gender-specific information and sex-disaggregated data, as well as targets and indicators, constitutes a major obstacle to effective monitoring. A number of entities are, however, working to include attention to gender perspectives in existing monitoring instruments, rather than developing separate monitoring systems for gender mainstreaming.

5. Accountability

50. As underlined by the agreed conclusions, accountability and political will at the highest levels of an entity are important for translation of the gender mainstreaming into practice. Lack of accountability remains one of the major challenges to successful implementation of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system. Successful gender mainstreaming requires that entities ensure that all categories of staff in their organizations take responsibility and are held accountable for bringing attention to gender perspectives in their areas of work. Challenges persist with regard to ensuring that staff other than gender specialists assume responsibility for gender mainstreaming.

51. Accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming need to be further developed. Some entities have introduced indicators on gender mainstreaming performance into staff appraisals; others have stressed the need to ensure that job descriptions and work plans refer specifically to responsibility and accountability for gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting task. A number of entities have included information on the roles and responsibilities of all staff in gender equality policies, strategies or action plans. Greater efforts need to be made to delineate responsibilities and accountabilities for gender mainstreaming and the ways by which senior managers can hold staff responsible.

52. Weaknesses in monitoring and reporting mechanisms and routines compound problems of accountability within entities.

III. Inter-agency collaboration on gender mainstreaming

53. The agreed conclusions 1997/2 encouraged greater inter-agency collaboration to ensure the integration of gender perspectives into all policies and programmes. The Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality has facilitated gender mainstreaming since its creation as a standing committee of the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (now the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB)). The Inter-Agency Network, which is chaired by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, provides a forum for the exchange of information on gender mainstreaming and collaboration on capacity-building and development of methodologies and tools. The Network has 60 members representing 25 entities. It carries out its work through annual plenary sessions and task forces which focus on gender mainstreaming in a wide range of issues, such as Millennium Development Goals; information and communication technologies; peace and security; CCAs/UNDAFs; trade; water; evaluation and monitoring, and reporting.

54. The Network has increased the capacity of entities to bring attention to gender perspectives in their work programmes. Capacity-building initiatives have included gender mainstreaming training workshops during annual meetings, which have

covered approaches and methodologies; training and capacity-building; preparations for and follow-up of global conferences; and programme reporting and monitoring.

55. In addition to enhancing the ability of entities to integrate gender perspectives into their work, the Network has played a catalytic role in supporting attention to gender perspectives in intergovernmental processes relating to the preparation and outcomes of and follow-up to major conferences and summits. The Network has collaborated with preparatory working groups and other bodies and organized interactive side events and dialogue, for example at the International Conference on Financing for Development (2002) and the World Summit on the Information Society (2003).

56. The Network has become an important actor in the implementation of the agreed conclusions. The Network provides reports on its work to CEB and its high-level committees for programme and management. It has collaborated with stakeholders outside the United Nations system in support of gender mainstreaming, for example the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)/ Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Network on Gender Equality, with which it has organized biannual workshops on specific themes.

57. Many entities are also involved in other inter-agency activities as members of gender networks or ad hoc thematic groupings, including country theme groups. Networks and groups set up to coordinate gender issues in specific sectoral areas, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee task force on gender and humanitarian assistance, and the inter-agency task team on gender and HIV/AIDS, have also contributed to furthering the objectives of the agreed conclusions.

58. A number of other inter-agency bodies have striven to bring greater attention to gender perspectives in their work. These include the United Nations Development Group Working Group on CCA/UNDAF Quality Assurance, which included gender as an indicator for success in the quality support and assurance system and in the revised CCA/UNDAF guidelines, as well as the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, which is developing guidelines for integrating gender dimensions into mine-action programmes. Gender perspectives are also taken up in the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs.

IV. Mainstreaming gender perspectives at the intergovernmental level

59. Progress in incorporating gender perspectives in intergovernmental processes is important for increasing the gender mainstreaming efforts of the United Nations system. The outcomes of intergovernmental processes provide mandates for the work of United Nations entities. Systematic attention to gender perspectives in intergovernmental processes provides an important impetus for gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system.

60. The Millennium Declaration, the outcomes of other major conferences and summits, and other policies and guidelines adopted by intergovernmental bodies, such as Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, have been used as an important framework for policy development and the design and implementation of programmes and operational activities in United Nations

entities. Many entities have linked their organizational priorities to the Millennium Development Goals.

61. The specific attention paid to gender mainstreaming strategy in the annual reports of the Secretary-General to the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and the resolutions on gender mainstreaming adopted by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly have provided important guidance to the United Nations system since 1997.

A. Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major conferences and summits, including the Millennium Summit

62. The conferences and summits of the past decade, including the Millennium Summit in 2000, the International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002, the United Nations Special Session on Children in 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 and the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003, have highlighted the cross-cutting nature of gender issues and the importance of gender equality for development. United Nations entities have explicitly used the outcomes of the conferences and summits as a basis for organizational priority setting. Although the extent of attention to gender perspectives has varied greatly in these processes, Governments have made commitments to gender equality and recommended action at the international, regional and national levels. Increased attention has to be given to gender perspectives in the reports which provide the basis for deliberations and recommendations by Member States.

63. The Millennium Declaration and its development goals transformed global agreements into specific time-bound targets and created a new platform for entities to coordinate their initiatives for the achievement of agreed objectives. The Declaration viewed progress towards gender equality as an objective in itself and as a goal that would contribute to the achievement of other development goals. Millennium Development Goal 3 focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of women. In assessing its implementation, progress should be measured in relation to each of the other interdependent and mutually reinforcing Millennium Development Goals. Gender perspectives should be taken into account in actions aimed at eradicating poverty and hunger, improving education, reducing maternal and child mortality, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability and partnerships for development. Analysis of gender equality perspectives in relation to the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals should be an important focus of the review and appraisal of the Millennium Declaration due to take place in 2005.

B. The General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies

64. Since the adoption of the agreed conclusions, the General Assembly has considered gender perspectives in discussions and resolutions adopted at its regular sessions. In plenary, the Assembly has considered gender perspectives in relation to development, international cooperation and humanitarian or political assistance to particular Member States. Since 2001, annual follow-up to the Millennium

Declaration has enabled the Assembly to examine gender equality in relation to education and maternal mortality. Gender perspectives have not been regularly reviewed in relation to the other goals.

65. The Second and Third Committees have paid most attention to gender equality. The Second Committee has addressed women in development issues on a biannual basis, and gender issues in financing for development, sustainable development, industrial development cooperation, human resources development, operational activities for development and the follow-up to the first Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Other issues, such as macroeconomic policy questions and science and technology, have not been considered systematically from a gender perspective. The Third Committee has devoted two agenda items specifically to gender equality and taken up gender mainstreaming under other agenda items relating to social development, youth, ageing, disabled persons, family issues, human rights, including specific country situations, crime prevention and criminal justice, refugee and displaced persons, humanitarian issues and children's rights.

66. The First Committee has paid attention to women in the context of disarmament, mainly in relation to the organization of specific events. The Fourth Committee has addressed gender perspectives to a limited extent, in relation to the need to publicize United Nations accomplishments, including in the area of women's rights, through its information centres. The Fifth Committee has considered the development of a policy on gender mainstreaming in peacekeeping. In its codification work, the Sixth Committee has addressed the potential effects of human cloning on women and the issue of trafficking in women, but has not paid attention to gender issues in other areas. There is scope for focusing on the importance of gender issues in areas such as budgetary and legal matters.

C. The Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions

67. Since 1997, the Economic and Social Council and its commissions have paid greater attention to gender equality both as a goal in itself and as a tool to achieve sectoral objectives. Consideration of gender issues by the Council and its various subsidiary bodies, however, has been uneven. The Council has addressed gender issues in all its segments since 1997. Gender perspectives have been integrated to varying degrees in policy-making, in coordination activities, in reviewing the work of the functional and regional commissions, and in assessing operational activities for development.

68. The high-level segments and Ministerial Declarations of the Council since 1999 have referred to the role of women or gender perspectives in relation to the role of work and employment in poverty eradication; information technology; the role of the United Nations in support of sustainable development in Africa; human resources development, including in the area of health and education; and rural development for poverty eradication and sustainable development. In its coordination segment in 2001, the Council discussed gender perspectives in information and communication technology.

69. The humanitarian segments in 1999 and 2002 stressed the need for the integration of a gender perspective into humanitarian activities, peace-building, conflict prevention and recovery. In its operational segment, the Council devoted its high-level meeting in 1998 to a discussion of operational activities in promoting

capacity-building and resource mobilization for the participation of women in development.

70. Since 2001, the agenda of the general segment has included a sub-item on mainstreaming, which has raised the visibility of the issue in relation to the Council's review of the work of its functional commissions. In 2002 and 2003, interactive panel discussions on gender mainstreaming complemented the deliberations.

71. Since 1997, many of the Council's 10 functional commissions[16] have increasingly focused on gender issues in relation to their specific sectoral mandates. For example, the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development have made efforts to consider gender perspectives as an integrated component of their work programmes. The Commission on Human Rights has integrated gender perspectives into its work, both under a separate agenda item and by taking gender issues into account in its thematic or country resolutions. Gender mainstreaming could be further promoted through the regular meetings of the Council's Bureau with the bureaux of its subsidiary bodies.

72. Valuable synergies between the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on the Status of Women on gender mainstreaming have been facilitated through the coordination of policies and reporting, and the participation of their chairpersons and of Secretariat staff in their respective meetings, as well as by the joint work programme of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

73. In the context of the multi-year programme of work, the Commission on the Status of Women has considered the gender dimensions of specific sectoral policies with a view to contributing to the integration of gender perspectives into the preparation and outcomes of, and follow-up to, major summits and conferences in the social and economic fields, for example the World Summit for Social Development and the World Summit on the Information Society. The Commission on the Status of Women has played a catalytic role in supporting gender mainstreaming in the Council and its commissions, inter alia by urging the inclusion of gender perspectives in reports and review processes.

74. While there has been interaction between the Commission on the Status of Women and some functional commissions, including the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on Population and Development, the Commission for Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, and the Commission on Social Development, other subsidiary bodies and the Council itself, have not made consistent use of the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, including its agreed conclusions on specific sectoral issues, such as natural disasters or information and communication technologies.

D. The Security Council

75. Over the past decade, the Security Council has taken into account the changing nature of conflict and focused increasingly on the prevention of armed conflict, the protection of civilians, children in armed conflict and reviews of the effectiveness of multidimensional peace operations. The Security Council has taken steps to ensure the integration of gender perspectives in the field of peace and security, following

the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security in 2000. In that resolution, gender perspectives were identified in relation to peace negotiations, peacekeeping operations, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives. The resolution has provided an important framework for action on gender mainstreaming in the areas of peace and security for other intergovernmental bodies, United Nations entities and NGOs. Open debates and Arria Formula meetings of the Security Council have provided opportunities to assess progress and forge links between the Council and NGOs.

76. In compliance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), a study on women, peace and security was carried out by the Secretary-General in 2002. A report, based on the findings of the study was submitted to the Security Council and discussed in an open meeting of the Council in October 2002.[17] The President of the Security Council reiterated the support of the Council for the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Concern was expressed at the slow progress in the appointment of women as special representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General and an increase in the number of women serving as high-level representatives was urged. Regular contacts with local women's groups and networks were encouraged, as well as efforts to ensure their full involvement in peace negotiations and reconstruction processes, particularly at decision-making levels.

77. The Security Council has increasingly addressed gender perspectives in its missions. The Council consulted with local women's groups during all three missions in 2003, to West Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, and Afghanistan. This can be compared with the fact that between 2000 and 2002 the Council consulted with women's groups on four out of a total of 10 missions. Assessment missions for the formulation of new peace operations in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti and the Sudan have benefited from briefings on gender issues, the preparation of checklists relating to the inclusion of gender perspectives, and the participation of gender advisers.

78. Challenges remain in relation to ensuring that gender issues are fully mainstreamed into the work of the Security Council. In relation to reports submitted to the Security Council, an analysis of 264 reports by the Secretary-General from January 2000 to September 2003 revealed that two thirds make only one or no mention of women or gender issues. The majority of reports referred to women and girls primarily as victims, not as potential actors who can and do make substantial contributions to peace and security. An analysis of resolutions adopted by the Security Council between January 2000 and March 2004 revealed that only 14.2 per cent include language on women or gender issues. Resolutions mandating new peace operations in 2003 and 2004 referred to the need for gender mainstreaming and included provisions for the establishment of gender units.

79. Monitoring of gender mainstreaming in peace operations has been identified as a particular challenge both at headquarters and in the field. A report by the Secretary-General, due in October 2004, will review the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). It will enable the Council to assess progress made in systematically incorporating attention to gender perspectives in all areas of work on peace and security, and to identify remaining challenges in gender mainstreaming in reports and resolutions, missions, peace negotiations, and the establishment and monitoring of multidimensional peace operations.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

80. **The agreed conclusions remain a valid framework for gender mainstreaming in the United Nations. United Nations entities and intergovernmental bodies have made progress in mainstreaming gender perspectives into all policies and programmes since 1997. However, further efforts are required to ensure the full implementation of the agreed conclusions. The gap between policy and practice remains a major constraint. Initiatives need to be undertaken at all levels to increase the active and visible use of gender mainstreaming as a complement to women-focused strategies. Commitment, support and accountability are required at the highest levels within entities.**

81. **Gender equality policies and strategies are largely in place throughout the United Nations system. Although attention has been given to many of the institutional requirements, such as specialist gender resources or networks of focal points, capacity-building activities and the development and use of methodologies and tools, including sex-disaggregated data, serious challenges remain at the institutional level. These include underdeveloped monitoring mechanisms and reporting requirements; lack of effective accountability mechanisms; inadequate availability and utilization of gender specialist resources; and insufficient capacity to carry out and apply gender analysis.**

82. **Inter-agency collaboration has significantly enhanced the use of the gender mainstreaming strategy through support for policy development, capacity-building, development of methodologies and tools, monitoring mechanisms, integration into budget processes, and advocacy and outreach in intergovernmental processes. Inter-agency collaboration will be increasingly important, particularly at operational levels.**

83. **The progress made in mainstreaming gender perspectives at the intergovernmental level has had an important impact on efforts throughout the United Nations system.**

84. **The Council may wish to take note of the progress achieved and put forward the following recommendations.**

The Council may wish to encourage United Nations entities to:

Policy, strategy and budget frameworks

- **Establish gender equality policy frameworks linked to overall organizational priorities, where these do not yet exist, and regularly assess their impact;**
- **Develop strategies or action plans for implementation, with clear guidelines on the practical application of gender mainstreaming;**
- **Fully integrate gender perspectives into sectoral policies and strategies;**
- **Incorporate attention to gender perspectives in medium-term plans, programme budgets and multi-year funding frameworks;**

Programmes and operational activities

- **Increase the demand for and capacity to carry out and systematically utilize gender analysis, including in operational activities;**
- **Fully incorporate gender perspectives in all reports prepared for intergovernmental bodies, including the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, the General Assembly and the Security Council;**
- **Ensure increased integration of gender perspectives into all operational mechanisms, such as CCAs, UNDAFs, PRSPs, and other processes, for example in relation to the Millennium Development Goals, including through enhanced inter-agency cooperation;**
- **Enhance the effectiveness of the gender theme groups by increasing the level of seniority of members, establishing clear mandates, developing links to other theme groups and providing adequate resources;**
- **Ensure attention to gender perspectives in all theme groups at the country level;**
- **Ensure, in addition to specific monitoring and evaluation of progress in gender mainstreaming, systematic integration of reporting on gender mainstreaming into existing monitoring and evaluation processes, including on the Millennium Development Goals;**

Institutional arrangements

- **Ensure adequate mandates, decision-making powers, access to information and resources and support from senior management for specialist gender resources, including gender focal points and theme groups in the field, and increase the number of men involved in this work;**
- **Increase awareness of the responsibilities of all staff for gender mainstreaming, including senior management, and develop effective accountability mechanisms;**
- **Develop more effective specialized training programmes, including adequate attention to follow-up, and integrate gender perspectives into all existing training programmes;**
- **Ensure systematic and effective dissemination, utilization and monitoring of the relevance of, methodologies, tools and good practice examples, including through inter-agency collaboration;**
- **Increase availability and use of sex-disaggregated data, gender-specific information and indicators in all sectors, including through inter-agency collaboration and increased collaboration with national statistical bodies.**

The Council may wish to encourage the governing bodies of agencies, funds and programmes to:

- **Ensure increased attention to gender mainstreaming in the exercise of their monitoring functions in medium-term plans, multi-year funding frameworks and programme budgets, and in the implementation and monitoring of operational activities.**

The Council may wish to establish consideration of gender mainstreaming as a regular agenda item in meetings of its bureau with the bureaux of functional commissions, and to encourage its functional commissions to:

- **Take further measures to integrate gender perspectives into their respective sector areas, including through their annual or multi-year work programmes, and in the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major conferences and summits;**
- **Increase their interaction with the Commission on the Status of Women and the use of specific guidance provided by that Commission for their sector areas.**

The Council may wish to encourage the Commission of Women to:

- **Contribute more systematically to the work of United Nations entities, the Council, other functional commissions, the General Assembly, other intergovernmental bodies and coordination mechanisms by providing practical guidance on gender mainstreaming.**

The Council may wish to recommend that the General Assembly:

- **Encourage its Committees and other bodies to take further measures to systematically integrate gender perspectives into all areas of their work;**
- **Ensure increased attention to mainstreaming gender perspectives into the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major summits and conferences, in particular the review and appraisal process of the Millennium Declaration in 2005.**

The Council may wish to recommend that the Security Council:

- **Ensure the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), so that gender perspectives are integrated into the mandates, policies and programmes of all peace operations, and into peace negotiations and peace-building initiatives;**
- **Increase access to specialist gender resources who can provide technical assistance at headquarters and in the field;**
- **Ensure the incorporation of gender perspectives in all assessment missions;**
- **Increase attention to gender perspectives in all resolutions.**

The Council may wish to recommend the following action on inter-agency coordination mechanisms:

- **The IANWGE should continue its work in policy development, capacity-building, the development of methodologies and tools, the exchange of good practices, the development of effective monitoring and evaluation processes and the provision of practical support to its members in gender mainstreaming and report annually to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination;**
- **All inter-agency mechanisms should give attention to gender perspectives in their work.**

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* and addendum (A/52/3/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Add.1), chap. IV, para. 4.

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-third Special Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/S-23/10/Rev.1).

[3] See resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2003 (E/2003/INF/2/Add.4).

[4] The following United Nations entities responded to a questionnaire: Department of Economic and Social Affairs; Department for Disarmament Affairs; Department of Management; Department of Political Affairs; Department of Public Information; Department for Peacekeeping Operations; Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; Office of Legal Affairs; Office of Internal Oversight Services; Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Environment Programme; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; United Nations Population Fund; United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat); Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; International Atomic Energy Agency; International Civil Aviation Organization; United Nations Children's Fund; International Civil Service Commission; United Nations Industrial Development Organization; International Fund for Agricultural Development; United Nations Development Fund for Women; International Maritime Organization; International Telecommunication Union; World Bank; World Food Programme; and the World Intellectual Property Organization. The International Organization for Migration also provided information.

[5] The report of the Secretary-General is complemented by four conference room papers providing more details on gender mainstreaming in operational work, in the work on peace and security, in intergovernmental processes and the contributions of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality. Further details of the work of United Nations entities are to be found in document E/CN.6/2004/3.

[6] See http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/activities/tfprogbudgproc.htm.

[7] UNDP/UNIFEM, *Scan of Gender Expertise in the UN System*, May 2003, p. 5.

[8] World Bank, Gender and Development Group, *Implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy: Second Annual Monitoring Report, FY03*, 2004.

[9] World Bank Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, Gender and Development Group, 9 August 2001, *Gender in the PRSPs: A Stocktaking*.

[10] For example, UNDP, *Millennium Development Goals National Reports: A View through the Gender Lens*, May 2003, http://www.undp.org/gender/docs/mdgs-genderlens.pdf.

[11] http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gmfpstudy.htm.

[12] For example, the Gender Equality Network, facilitated by UNDP, used by staff of several United Nations Development Group member agencies.

[13] For example, INSTRAW, ECLAC, UNDP, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNITAR, ILO, OCHA, UNIFEM, and the inter-agency web site, womenwatch.

[14] See http://www.un.org/womenwatch.

[15] For example the Statistical Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the World Bank, ECE and ESCWA.

[16] Commission for Social Development, Statistical Commission, Commission on Human Rights, Commission on Population and Development, Commission on Sustainable Development, Commission on Narcotic Drugs, Commission on Science and Technology for Development, Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, United Nations Forum on Forests, Commission on the Status of Women.

[17] United Nations sales publication No. E.03.IV.1 and document S/2002/1154.

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Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation: follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council

Assessment of the value added of the joint meetings of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In the light of the comments of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group (the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Executive Directors of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP)), the present report reviews the value added of the joint meetings of the Executive Boards and their impact on the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council and makes suggestions for further consideration of the issue by the Council. The key consideration should be the contribution of current or alternative arrangements in advancing the basic policy objective of greater system-wide coherence in support of countries' development priorities and agreed development goals that are guiding the Council's work and the forthcoming triennial policy review of operational activities.

* E/2004/100.

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I. Introduction[1]

1. The present report has been prepared for consideration by the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with paragraph 28 of Council resolution 2003/3 on a triennial comprehensive policy review of the United Nations operational activities for development, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General, in due consultation with the funds and programmes, through the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group, to submit to the next substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2004 a report on the assessment of the value added of the joint meetings of the Executive Boards and their impact on the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council, and to make recommendations as appropriate.

II. The value added of the joint meetings of the Executive Boards: views of the members of the Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group

2. In pursuance of the Council's request, the members of Executive Committee of the United Nations Development Group (the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Executive Directors of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP)) were requested to provide their assessment of the joint board meetings. In response, the members conveyed the following collective views.

3. The Committee members stressed, at the outset, that they considered the joint board meetings to be a very important issue for the effective governance of the funds and programmes, as well as for their continued efficient operations.

4. They further observed that in order to set the issue in a proper context, it was useful to recall the format and impact of the joint meetings flowing from General Assembly resolution 52/12 B of December 1997. As a result of that resolution, the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF organized their respective annual sessions to take place in New York over two successive weeks. This has allowed delegates from Member States worldwide to maximize their efficiency and participate in the work of all three organizations in a single trip to New York. The exception to this practice is the annual meeting of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, which meets every other year at Geneva, for which there is no advantage to consecutive scheduling. The WFP Executive Board always holds its three sessions per year in Rome and therefore operates on an independent schedule, although care is taken to ensure that there is no overlap in timing with the meetings of the other Boards and that the operational segment of the annual session takes place in June to harmonize the review of country programmes with other funds and programmes.

5. As a result of General Assembly resolution 52/12 B, there is now an annual joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, and UNICEF, with the participation of WFP, which takes place in New York. Normally scheduled for January, the meeting started out as a half-day session and has now expanded to two full days. This meeting normally occurs on the final Friday of one Board session (UNDP/UNFPA or UNICEF) and the following Monday of the next Board session.

6. The current selection of up to four or five agenda items is made jointly by the Bureau members of the UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP Boards and short background papers are prepared jointly by the four secretariats. Chairing of the meeting rotates among the three Board presidents, with secretariat services provided by the organization whose president is presiding. Items selected for discussion generally cover specific operational issues or process issues of cross-cutting interest to all four Executive Committee members.

7. The joint meetings were intended to take into account the respective mandates of the individual Boards. It was not intended that decisions would be taken at the meetings. A summary record of each joint meeting is attached to the annual report to the Economic and Social Council of the four funds and programmes. In this way the Council can stay informed of the discussions in the joint meetings and can take whatever decisions it deems necessary in that context. In addition, selected issues before the joint meetings of the Executive Boards are discussed, as deemed appropriate, within the individual Boards.

8. On the basis of experience gained over the past seven years, the Executive Committee members are of the view that the joint meetings have provided a useful addition to the ongoing operational dialogue facilitating discussion of operational issues facing all four agencies. This has addressed a gap that existed between the single agency discussions on operational and policy issues in individual Boards and the more general global policy dialogue that takes place in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

9. Despite the above success of the meetings, several shortcomings remain. While the meetings are intended to be joint, it has proven impractical to bring the entire WFP Board to New York and it is represented at the meetings by members of its Bureau. Furthermore, many of the cross-cutting programme issues addressed in the joint meetings also apply to one or more specialized agencies, whose views can now only find expression in the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly. This can lead to some duplication of discussions.

10. Having considered experiences to date and possible alternatives for the future, the members of the Executive Committee believe it would be useful to conduct further discussions between Member States and the concerned funds and programmes about any more formal approach to the joint meetings of the Executive Boards, in particular any approach that would involve formal decision-making authority. The strength of the current structure is that it allows for agency-specific consideration of operational issues by delegates with the particular expertise and knowledge required to address the issues at hand.

11. In considering a joint meeting with decision-making authority, the members of the Executive Committee emphasized that one issue to consider would be the relationship with the Economic and Social Council and its functions and the need to avoid establishing another layer of governance, suggesting that efforts should be made to find simpler structures and to effect a reduction in costs and in the number of meetings, giving due consideration to the implications of any decisions in terms of resulting workload. The members suggested that the creation of a new decision-making body should also require resolution of a number of issues, including those of membership, bureau composition and chairmanship, rules of procedure, documentation and mandate.

12. It is the view of the four members of the Executive Committee that the Member States may wish to build on the current system of joint meetings, with submission of a summary of discussions to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly and periodic reviews to determine relevance, effectiveness and the way forward. In addition to the type of items already under discussion in the joint meetings, the members suggested several additional issues that have the potential for such consideration, such as the agencies' annual reports to the Economic and Social Council, individual United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (bearing in mind that these frameworks are owned by national authorities) and the integrated and coordinated follow-up to international conferences and the Millennium Development Goals.

13. Recalling that the governance of the funds and programmes is a matter for the intergovernmental process to decide, the members of the Executive Committee stressed that their views should be taken as preliminary advice, not as a set position, which remains the prerogative of Member States.

14. **While addressing the issue, in the light of the above comments of the members of the Executive Committee, as to how the current experiment of joint meetings of the Executive Boards might most effectively evolve in the future, the key consideration for the Economic and Social Council should be the contribution of current or alternative arrangements (such as the alternatives reviewed in paragraph 10 above) in advancing the basic policy objective of greater system-wide coherence in support of countries development priorities and agreed development goals that guide the Council's work and the forthcoming triennial policy review of operational activities.**

15. **The assessment of the Economic and Social Council should not be made in isolation, but should be approached as an integral part of the overall effort at rationalizing and strengthening the totality of the existing governance arrangements for operational activities, so that duplication may be avoided, comparative advantages duly exploited and overall capacity to advance the basic policy objective outlined above maximized.**

16. **In this perspective, the value added of joint meetings of the Boards should be assessed not only in relation to the management responsibilities of individual Boards, but also from the vantage point of compatibility with, and contribution to, an effective exercise by the Economic and Social Council of its oversight responsibilities vis-à-vis the Boards, both individually and collectively, as well as its role vis-à-vis the system as a whole.**

17. **The issue of the impact on the operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council specifically referred to in the mandate for the present report should be addressed in this light. Any impact at this stage is only indirect, through the reports of individual Boards, because the agendas for the Boards and their joint meetings and for the Council's operational activities segment, while they may relate, at times, to the same broad issues, proceed along distinct lines.**

18. **To the extent that some of the basic aims of the joint meetings of the Boards and operational activities segment of the Economic and Social Council broadly overlap, at least in terms of advancing coordination in the overall work of United Nations funds and programmes, there should be a deliberate effort to determine what dimensions of such coordination are best pursued, through which mechanisms and/or to systematize linkages to maximize mutual reinforcement.**

Notes

[1] The present report has been prepared with contributions from United Nations system agencies, in particular FAO, IFAD, WFP and Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

Annex

Joint meeting agendas 1998-2004

January 1998	United Nations reform and its impact on the funds and programmes
January 1999	Resource flows, follow-up to international conferences, resident coordinator system Monitoring and evaluation: use of common indicators Harmonization of programme cycles; common premises and services; United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and common country assessments
January 2000	United Nations Development Assistance Framework in India
January 2001	Poul Nielson "The United Nations and Europe: active multilateral partners" Progress with common country assessment indicator frameworks Discussion with executive heads of funds and programmes Staff security
January 2002	Millennium Development Goals Common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks Harmonization and simplification of procedures Staff safety and security Briefing on the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan
June 2003	Simplification and harmonization Progress report on transition from relief to development Building on Monterrey HIV/AIDS: the five-year evaluation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Millennium Development Goals in Nepal
January 2004	HIV/AIDS: regional initiatives Simplification and harmonization Resident coordinator system Security

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Economic and environmental questions

Science and technology for development

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Economic and Social Council the report by the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union on the first phase and progress in the preparations for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society as requested in General Assembly resolution 57/238.

* A/59/50.
** E/2004/100.

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Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 57/238, which calls upon the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union to report annually to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society.

It provides, inter alia, a report on the outcome of the first phase of the Summit, held in Geneva, from 10 to 13 December 2003, as well as details on the preparations under way for the second phase of the Summit, to be held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005.

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Report of the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union on the first phase and progress in the preparations for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society

I. Background

1. The impetus for the World Summit on the Information Society began with a resolution introduced by Tunisia and adapted by the 1998 Plenipotentiary Conference of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). This resolution called for consultations among the United Nations agencies, which led to agreement on the need to hold a World Summit on this topic. At its 2001 session, the International Telecommunication Union Council decided that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) would be held in two phases: in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005.

2. The Summit was endorsed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in resolutions 56/183 and 57/238. The resolutions call upon the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union to report annually to the Economic and Social Council on the Summit.

3. The Summit was convened under the high patronage of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, with ITU taking the lead role in its preparation, in cooperation with other interested United Nations agencies and other international agencies, and the host countries, Switzerland and Tunisia.

4. The World Summit on the Information Society was designed to provide a global platform where key players — Governments, United Nations agencies, the private sector and civil society — could come together to develop a common vision and understanding of the information society and to adopt a declaration and a plan of action.

II. Summit format

5. The preparation and holding of the World Summit on the Information Society introduced several innovations to the holding of global summits.

6. First, it was decided to hold the Summit in two phases, with Switzerland and Tunisia as the host countries. The first phase took place in Geneva and the second is scheduled for Tunis on 16-18 November 2005. This two-step process and the involvement of host countries from the North and South is facilitating full consideration of all relevant issues and promoting accountability of the Summit output, since the second phase can review the achievements of the period following the first phase. Several difficult issues that could not be resolved in Geneva can be further considered in Tunisia.

7. Furthermore, considering that issues of the information society touch on the mandates of many agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, in 1999 the Chief Executives Board (CEB) of United Nations agency heads established the High-level Summit Organizing Committee (HLSOC) to coordinate the role and input of United Nations agencies in the Summit. The Committee is chaired by the

ITU Secretary-General and met formally on two occasions and at working level five times to prepare for the first phase. The Committee was instrumental in providing input to the Summit that led to recognition of the importance of international organizations as a stakeholder in implementing the Geneva Action Plan. Next, the Summit achieved further progress in ensuring the involvement of all stakeholders in major world gatherings. Both the private sector and civil society were closely involved in the Summit preparations and contributed significantly to the meetings of the Preparatory Committee. Civil society formed a bureau to represent its diverse viewpoints, and both that bureau and the private sector met on several occasions with the governmental bureau of the Summit. Sector members of ITU were automatically accredited to participate in the Summit and the preparatory process.

8. Finally, the Summit was organized on the basis of voluntary donations of funding and staff. The United Nations General Assembly did not provide any funding for the Summit and ITU governing bodies allocated only minimal sums. Given its multidisciplinary nature, an Executive Secretariat was established, based in Geneva and hosted by ITU, to prepare the Summit, consisting of experts detached from Governments, United Nations agencies, civil society and the private sector. Finances for Summit preparations were obtained through a fund-raising campaign to attract voluntary contributions and through a loan mechanism established by ITU.

III. Summit preparatory phase

9. To identify the themes to be considered by the Summit, a preparatory process was initiated in July 2002. This process was led by the three preparatory committee meetings, which were held during 2002 and 2003.

10. In addition to the preparatory committee meetings, regional preparatory conferences were also held to assess challenges, opportunities and constraints stemming from the information society, to develop a common vision for the region and to prepare a plan to address the key issues and solve the problems identified.

11. The results of the regional conferences have been considered official contributions to the Summit, and their content was formally considered in the drafting of Summit documents. More information about the preparatory process is available at: http://www.itu.int/wsis/preparatory/index.html.

IV. Outcome of the first phase of the Summit

12. The Summit was organized by ITU and Switzerland, with the support of many United Nations agencies, through the High-Level Summit Organizing Committee (HLSOC). The Secretary-General of ITU served as Secretary-General of the Summit and of the preparatory committee meetings.

13. The Geneva phase was the first global gathering of world leaders to address the issues of the information society, including the use of information and communication technologies for development, cyber-security, Internet governance, affordable access to communications, infrastructure and capacity-building, cultural diversity and the media.

14. The Untied Nations Secretary-General expressed a very positive attitude to information and communication technologies in his opening remarks to the Summit, pointing out that it was perhaps the first global Summit to be built around an opportunity rather than a problem.

15. The first phase was widely considered to be a success. Close to 50 heads of State or Government and vice-presidents attended the Summit. More than 11,000 delegates participated in the deliberations, representing 175 United Nations Member States. Other delegates who attended included:

- 3,300 representatives of civil society
- 514 business representatives from 99 organizations
- 87 international organizations
- More than 1,000 journalists.

16. The first phase was also the occasion for more than 300 Summit-related events in Geneva, including major meetings organized by many different United Nations agencies and other regional and international organizations.

17. The core outputs of the World Summit on the Information Society from the first phase are contained in two basic documents — a Declaration of Principles and a Plan of Action — which were drafted during the preparatory process and adopted by Governments in plenary at the Summit. The final texts are available at http://www.itu.int/wsis/.

A. Achieving a common vision of the information society

18. The information society may be defined as a society in which social and economic development is based at least as much on the use of information and knowledge and on the exchange of services, as on industry or natural resources.

19. The Declaration defines a common vision of an inclusive and people-centred information society, in which all citizens should be able to create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge. For this reason, the Declaration recognizes that information and communication technologies are a fundamental tool to foster social and economic development. Their advancement and promotion by Governments and other stakeholders are prerequisites for this achievement.

B. Setting out an agenda for building an inclusive, development-oriented information society

20. After setting forth a definition of what an information society should be, the Declaration establishes 11 basic principles. Key among them are the importance of infrastructure as an essential foundation of the information society, the need for affordable access to information and knowledge, capacity-building, enabling environment, building confidence and security in the use of information and communication technologies, e-applications and international and regional cooperation.

21. Following those principles, the Plan of Action lists a wide range of activities that must be undertaken to harness the potential of information and communication technologies to contribute towards human progress. The Plan of Action can be subdivided into two parts. The first is a set of objectives and action lines to be achieved by 2015, with the main intent being to ensure access to information and communications by all citizens, coupled with specific targets and dates to connect all key institutions (schools, hospitals, etc.).

22. The second part of the Action Plan links the principles of the Declaration with specific actions. Although the Plan of Action is addressed to all stakeholders, in many sections, it refers specifically to tasks to be undertaken by international organizations and to their efforts to assist Governments.

23. Together, the documents represent a forceful statement of the case for information and communication technologies, including specific targets for connectivity and information and communication technology deployment and applications that could be implemented nationally and internationally to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

C. Initiate action in a number of crucially important areas, such as the creation of a digital solidarity fund and Internet governance

24. Since the Summit will have two phases, participants have the possibility to continue discussion on two particularly complex issues that could not be resolved in Geneva, i.e., Internet governance and financing mechanisms.

25. To move forward, the Declaration and Plan of Action call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to establish a working group on Internet governance and to organize a task force on financing mechanisms to bridge the digital divide.

26. To support the process of consultations on the issue of Internet governance, a small secretariat will be set up in Geneva. Since last December, a number of meetings on Internet governance have already been organized to follow up on the Summit's outcomes: an ITU workshop (Geneva, 26 and 27 February 2004); an Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers workshop (Rome, 5 and 6 March 2004); a meeting of the International Chamber of Commerce's (ICC) special advisory committee (Paris, 24 February 2004); and a United Nations Information and Communication Technology Task Force global forum on Internet governance (New York, 25 and 26 March 2004). These events attracted wide participation from all sectors and helped the various stakeholders to achieve a better understanding of the issues involved and to convey their respective positions.

27. As for a task force on Information and Communication Technology funding, the Administrator of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been asked to take the lead in following up on the relevant recommendations of the World Summit on the Information Society, in consultation with the World Bank and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

V. Summit implementation and the role of the United Nations family

28. The Summit provides a departure point for action. All stakeholders will have now to continue contributing to the preparation of the Summit's second phase and work to implement the Plan of Action approved in Geneva.

29. The next steps towards the second phase require United Nations agencies to contribute to the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action within their respective mandates, to help organize and actively participate in thematic meetings and other Summit-related events, and to contribute both staff and financial resources to the secretariat of the Summit.

A. United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination

30. The outcome of the first phase was on the agenda of the Board meeting, which took place in Vienna on 2 April 2004. The Board considered the first phase of the Summit a success, and stressed the importance of implementing the Plan of Action of the Geneva phase and collectively addressing the challenges ahead, in particular those involving the key issues of Internet governance and funding mechanisms to bridge the digital divide. It urged its members to participate actively in the preparatory process of the Tunis phase of the Summit and contribute to ensuring its success. The Committee also requested the High-level Committee on Programmes for a substantive, action-oriented paper to assist its deliberations on the subject at its fall 2004 session, building on the work of the High-Level Summit Organizing Committee.

B. High-Level Summit Organizing Committee

31. The High-Level Summit Organizing Committee held its third meeting on 1 April 2004, just ahead of the Board meeting in Vienna, to evaluate Summit outcomes and the possible role of United Nations organizations.

32. Members underlined the importance of a system-wide mobilization in implementing the Summit's outcomes, and concluded that United Nations agencies must make every effort so that they can report on significant progress at the Tunis phase of the Summit. This will require careful collaboration and cooperation among Board members to avoid duplication of efforts and to enhance synergies. To achieve this, a careful and thorough stocktaking exercise of current and planned actions relating to the Summit is going to be prepared with the participation of all Organizing Committee members, and will then be posted on the Summit web site.

VI. Towards the second phase

33. An informal brainstorming took place in Hammamet, Tunisia, on 2 and 3 March 2004, to exchange ideas and views on the path to follow towards the second phase of the Summit.

34. The Geneva phase of the Summit called for a preparatory meeting in the first half of 2004 to set the road map and the issues for the second phase. This meeting will be held in Hammamet from 24 to 26 June 2004.

35. The provisional Bureau for the Summit has been established, with 30 members plus the two host countries.

VII. Conclusion

36. **Building on the success of the first phase, there is great interest in this second phase and in the realization of the objectives set out in the Plan of Action. However, it is important to fully benefit from the momentum gained and from the goodwill and the international consensus among all stakeholders generated during the Geneva phase of the Summit. It is vital that Governments support the second phase, and the Secretary-General of ITU has already launched a fund-raising campaign for that purpose.**